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LEGAL IN MASSACHUSETTS

On December 7, 1995, Governor William A. Weld signed HB 295, making the ownership of ferrets in Massachusetts legal. The law takes effect on March 7, 1996.

...one giant leap for ferret-kind...

"As of today, Massachusetts is no longer one of the last three hold outs in the country immune to the discrete charm of the domestic ferret.

"For 60 years, Massachusetts has treated these creatures as if they were outlaws on a level with Billy the Kid. Ferrets may wear masks that make them **look** like bandits, but the consensus is that they're usually law-abiding, litter-box-using types.

"Still, the state not only made it illegal for people to harbor them — we even threatened to yank vets' licenses if they so much as gave a ferret a rabies shot. A typical big government move: endangering public health in the process of protecting it. The ferrets were still with us — by some counts, there are 20,000 such fugitives in the state — only our meddling left them vulnerable to rabies.

"The bill that I am about to sign addresses public health concerns more intelligently. It legalizes pet ferrets, but requires them to be inoculated and spayed and neutered — and requires breeders to be licensed.

"With this law, ferret owners will finally be able to step out of the shadows. For years, they have lived in fear that an officer of the law would bang on the door late at night, grab the family ferret, and arrest them.

"Search and seizure may make sense if there's a crocodile in the tub, or a cougar in the closet — but a ferret on the Barcalounger? Well, that's what domestic bliss is made of, and any government that interrupts such benign happiness is going too far.

"And ferret owners who wanted to meet, celebrate, and show their pets were forced to travel to Rhode Island and New Hampshire to exercise the simple right of assembly.

"Ladies and gentlemen, Massachusetts is the birthplace of American Democracy. As long as public health and safety are not compromised, it's our duty to allow ferret fanciers the greatest freedom possible. This bill accomplishes that end.

"Therefore, in the name of liberty and justice for all on four feet as well as two, I'm delighted to sign this bill..."

Governor William A. Weld, Massachusetts
Signing Ceremony for HB 295, December 13, 1995

Mary Shefferman and Sabrina

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Mary Shefferman - Editor-in-Chief
Eric Shefferman - Designer
Sabrina - First Ferret
Ralph - Second Ferret
Marshmallow - Third Ferret
Knuks - Fourth Ferret
- also helping -
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"Chessy"
©1996 Modern Ferret
with Chessy courtesy of
Sue Morrow
and featuring the
Bally® Centaur pinball
(a real fun machine).
Photo by Eric Shefferman.

Minding Your Own Business™

What's happening in the ferret world? Well, Massachusetts has gone legal (officially on March 7th). Three cheers and kudos to all the very hard-working folks involved! And a special tribute to Sharon Burbine and Bill Williamson, who are truly friends of ferrets everywhere. But the struggle for proper care and fair treatment is just beginning. Now ferret owners in Massachusetts have to face the task of educating and setting up shelters. Keep up the great work! A quick summary of the steps to legalization appears on Page 7. Look for a more complete discussion next time.

There's a lot to look forward to in this issue of Modern Ferret. You'll get a look at Legion of Superferrets (LOS), a national (going international!) ferret club dedicated to educating ferret owners. What makes LOS different from other national ferret organizations? Turn to Page 18 to find out.

Other stories in this issue:

- A group of ferret folks in Maryland has decided that enough ferrets have been killed and tested for rabies. The group is now working towards changing the state's rabies policy.
- A not-to-be-missed article on ferretproofing. Check out Page 6 to read about some great starting points for a task that never ends.
- What kind of strange events led to the importation of ferrets from the United Kingdom to the United States? Turn to Page 26 for the answer, if you dare!
- What's the difference between proteins? What are amino acids? What does your ferret need to eat? Animal nutritionist Martin Glinsky, PhD, talks about ferret nutrition, starting on Page 34.

In addition, we have many of our regular departments — plus something new. Ferret lovers come from all walks of life and all countries of the planet. Our first installment of the new department "Wide World of Ferrets" features reports from Japan and Australia. Also in this issue: Dr. to Dr. addresses hemolytic anemia; Tricks for Treats gets down and begs; Ralph reviews neat new stuff; and an original Ferretted Fairy Tale.

Enjoy!

Now I'll take a little space to get up on a soapbox and tell you what I think. Consider it a sort of public service announcement. I'll call it ...

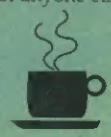
Just Say "No" to Wood Chips.

Don't keep your ferret in wood chips. Don't. Don't. Don't. Yes, I know pet shops do it. Yes, I know you've seen photos of ferrets in wood chips. But don't do it. Ferrets really don't need wood chip bedding; they use a litter box and they're perfectly happy to curl up in an old sweatshirt. More important, wood chip bedding can cause some severe reactions in ferrets (runny eyes and noses, severe itching). Sure, wood chips are inexpensive and relatively easy to clean. But whatever time, effort, and money you save is not worth your ferret's health and well-being. If you want to line the pan under your ferret cage (if there's wire mesh flooring with a pan beneath it), you can use newspaper or paper towels.

Why shouldn't you use wood chips? Both cedar and pine shavings are treated with oils that can irritate your ferret's skin, mucous membranes, and respiratory tract. When a ferret breathes in the fumes from these oils for a prolonged period of time, he can develop a wheeze or cough. On top of that, these things can irritate your skin, mucous membranes, and respiratory tract, as well (something of great importance to people like me, who have allergies).

So do your ferret and yourself a favor and just say NO to wood chips.

(This is my own personal opinion and does not necessarily reflect the opinion of anyone else in the galaxy.)



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Modern Ferret™

Vol. 1 No. 5

For ferret owners. By ferret owners.™

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He is not from this country. His ways are not like ours. Page 26!

ZOWIE!

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BOING!

Pink Noses™

presents: "The Rockpile"

Somebody Slipped Me A Mickey!
Buddy by Rick Nagel of Severna Park MD

The Hangout
Noel, Spanky, Aspen, Slinky, and Heidi
by Kristin Bell of Columbus MS

The Lineup
Ozzie, Sparky, Nicky, Trixie, Crystal, and Snickers
by Cathy Costello of Union NJ

Big Brother Is Watching You
Philip Langley of Australia

Protective Custody
Jennifer Fingerle and Bandit
of Dayville CT

The Alibi
Jennifer Berardino and Rikki
of Wilmer AL

The Bank Job
Suki by Sharn Maslosky
of Mineola NY

The Usual Suspects
Buddy and Sonny
by Gayle Massarella of Fairfax VA

The Private Investigator
Lou Lou by Dr. Hether Churchill
of Oklahoma City OK

The Ringleader
Tequila by Nicole Reggia
of Perkasie PA

I Swear He Was Dead When I Found Him!
Midnight by Molly Anderson
of Sheboygan WI

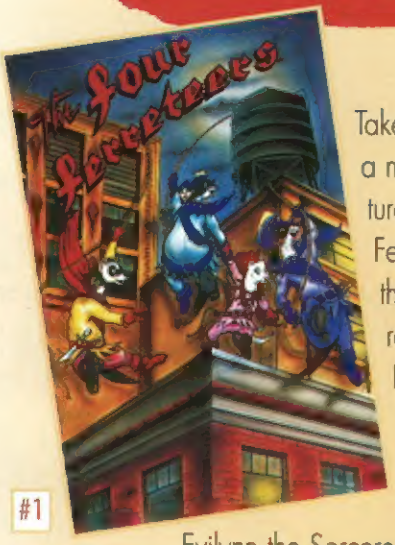
Stop! Thief!
Chloe by Mark and Linda Cummings
of Raritan NJ

The Hideout
Vinny, General, and Uncle Jesse
by Erin Smith of Short Hills NJ

The Great Train Robbery
Mr. Peanut by Corrie Rooney
of Bayonne NJ

I Found Him In The Alley
Gizmo by Tami and Tommy Marsden
of Bellmore NY

Presenting the Ferret Tale with Super Powers



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http://www.maferrets.org/index.html

By Bill Williamson

Congratulations from
Mary & Eric & the modern ferrets:
Sabrina, Ralph, Marshmallow, and Knuks

On December 7, 1995, Governor William A. Weld signed House Bill 295 into law. The bill legalizes the ownership of domestic ferrets in Massachusetts.

The signing resulted from a multi-year-long lobbying effort started by Geri Collins. The effort was continued in 1995 by many ferret owners who came together under the name "Mass Friends of the Domestic Ferret." The Mass Friends group worked to help ensure the passage of the bill into law.

Significant help, advice, and support was also provided by the California Domestic Ferret Association, many owners and shelters from New Hampshire, *Modern Ferret* magazine, Bill Gruber (Moderator of the electronic Ferret Mailing List), and others who are, quite honestly, too numerous to mention. It seemed that everyone who knew about ferrets wanted this bill to pass and was willing to help.

The original version of the bill, which was supported by the Massachusetts Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (MSPCA), prohibited the sale of ferrets by pet stores in the state. But at the last minute, the pet store industry unexpectedly amended the bill to allow pet stores to sell ferrets. This move angered the MSPCA, which had blocked similar bills in the past because of this issue. This turn of events required a lot of last minute effort and some expense to ensure that the bill was not sent back again for further study. Under the leadership of Sharon Burbine, ferret owners responded swiftly and strongly. It truly made the difference this year.

The bill takes effect on March 7, 1996, which provides time for ferret owners and others to educate the Massachusetts public. Several events are planned by the Mass Friends group prior to the seventh, which has been dubbed "Ferret Freedom Day." Call the Hot Line at (617) 224-1098 for further information about these upcoming events.

Bill Williamson is one of the charter members of the Mass Friends of the Domestic Ferret. He and Sharon both put in a huge amount of time (and, I'm sure, expense!) to ensure passage of HB 295 this past year.

NOTE: Please keep in mind that ferrets are technically not legal in Massachusetts until March 7, 1996. Although it's anyone's guess how the law will be enforced between now and then, erring on the side of safety for your ferret(s) might be the best choice. — Mary.

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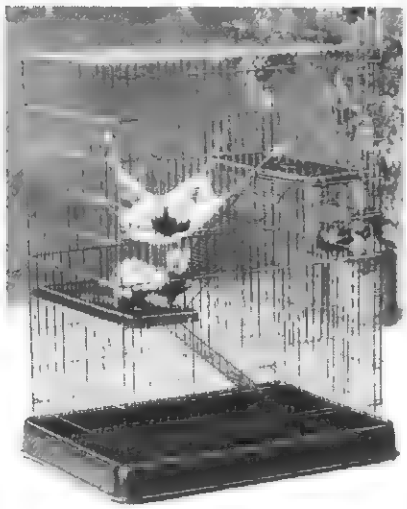

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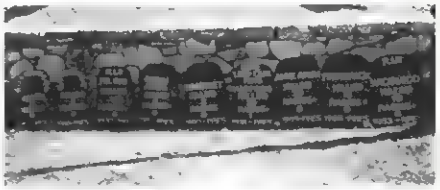
Getting Rational About Rabies in Maryland



"... [T]he State of Maryland ... has ordered the killing of at least 200 pet ferrets for rabies testing since the mid-80's. Each ferret killed and tested for rabies costs the Maryland taxpayer an estimated $300."

"In over a half century less than 20 ferrets have been reported with rabies in the U.S. ... Last year, one ferret was reported rabid in the entire U.S. This ferret lived in Maryland; it lived outside and was not vaccinated against rabies."

— From "Why are they killing our pets?" a brochure published by the Maryland Coalition for Rational Rabies Policies

Facts like those above as well as a poorly handled ferret bite incident in Hagerstown last year have prompted a group of Maryland ferret owners to form the Maryland Coalition for Rational Rabies Policies. The Coalition is an independent group of the Maryland ferret clubs. The Hagerstown case was the last straw for many of the Coalition's founders. A 12-year-old girl's 5-month-old pet ferret, Rasha, bit another girl at a slumber party. Rasha had never been outside and so was not at risk for having rabies. The Maryland Health Department waited a month before taking any action — a move that would have cost the girl her life if Rasha had rabies. A district court ruled that Rasha be killed and tested for rabies. The test was negative. Rasha's owners are currently appealing for compensation for the value of the ferret and for their grief. The Coalition gave half of its funding to the appeal in the Rasha case to help pay the attorney's fees.

The main purpose of the Coalition is to bring about a change in Maryland's current policy on rabies as it pertains to ferrets. A member of the Coalition who is an attorney (and a ferret owner) has helped draft a bill that will do just that. Instead of a bill specifically addressing ferrets, the bill will insert the words "and ferret" after the words "cat and dog" everywhere they appear in the existing regulations. Thus, ferrets would be considered domesticated, the Department of Health would have to designate a reasonable quarantine period, and all ferrets would be required to be vaccinated against rabies. Basically, the bill will put the ferret on the same legal footing as the dog and cat. The bill does not specify the length of a quarantine period, but instead leaves the Department of Health to determine an appropriate period. Says Diane Rogers, "We don't care as long as they establish one."

Once the strategy for changing the rabies policy was chosen, the next step was getting a delegate to sponsor the legislation. The Coalition found Democrat Marsha Perry, a 10-year veteran in the legislature who has sponsored other animal bills. Coalition members had to educate Ms. Perry about ferrets, first sending her all sorts of information about ferrets and then meeting with her in December 1995. By the end of the 2-hour meeting, Ms. Perry was committed to the cause.

Ms. Perry is currently networking with her contacts to get co-sponsors for the bill. She will educate the co-sponsors herself, then the Coalition will start its education campaign. "We're being asked to make a mass visit down to all of our delegates in Annapolis and hand out the brochure and try to meet face-to-face so they'll be familiar with the issues before the hearing comes up," Diane explains. The Coalition is hoping to get a good deal of press coverage from a planned rally on the steps of the capital. There is some hope that the Department of Health will make the changes administratively once it hears about the legislation. But the Coalition is not relying on that.

Now the focus is on getting through the hearing and getting the bill out of committee. To do that, the Coalition is calling on professionals such as veterinarians, physicians, and others with expert knowledge to testify at the hearing. Those willing to give expert testimony should contact the Coalition.

Perhaps the most difficult task for the Coalition was collecting the bite/test data from all the counties. Several times the Coalition had to file Freedom of Information complaints with the State Attorney General's office. "The way they stonewalled us in some of these places was unbelievable," Diane says. In all, gathering the information from the counties took nine months.

Once the data were collected, they were presented in a dramatic fashion. A tombstone was created for each county and the number of ferrets tested for rabies and the number of positive tests (usually 0) are listed. This moving display plus a reading of the data (the "death roll call") has a stirring impression on those see it. The Coalition plans on bringing the tombstones to the demonstration at the legislature.

Maryland ferret owners are urged to contact their individual legislators. Letters of support might prove very helpful; Maryland residents can contact the Coalition for more information and direction.

For more information, contact:

Diane B. Rogers, President, Baltimore Ferret Club, 2306 Pickwick Rd., Baltimore MD 21207, 410-448-1281
Freddie Ann Hoffman, MD, Vice President, American Ferret Association, 10117 Donegal Ct., Potomac MD 20854, 301-774-7312
James Pembrook Scott, Esq., Vice President, Bay Area Ferret Club, 252 Long Point Rd., Crownsville MD 21032, 410-923-2417
Charles Weiss, DVM, 10020 River Road, Potomac MD 20854, 301-299-4142

Ferretproofing: A Safe Home Is A Happy Home

Remember that ferretproofing is an ongoing process

By Pam Greene

<http://www.optics.rochester.edu:8080/users/pgreene/central.html>

As every ferret owner knows, our little friends love to get into trouble. Whether your ferrets live in a cage when you're not around or are free all the time, whether they live in a single room or have the run of the house, the first line of defense for both your ferrets and your possessions is a well-ferretproofed home.

There are four basic steps in ferretproofing:

1. **BLOCK** places you don't want your ferrets to go.
2. **MOVE** things which would be dangerous to them (or damaged by them) out of reach.
3. **PROTECT** things you can't move out of the way.
4. **REMEMBER** that ferretproofing is an ongoing process.

The first step in ferretproofing a home is to block off all the holes around your baseboards and anywhere else your ferret might possibly go in her explorations. Ferrets love to worm their way into any little hole (as small as 2" X 2", or smaller for kits and some adults), which can be very bad if the hole in question leads into a wall or to the outside. Spaces under and behind refrigerators and other appliances should also be blocked off, since there are often exposed fans, belts, insulation, and other dangers. Crawl around on your stomach to look for holes near the floor, especially in the kitchen, bathrooms, and laundry area. Even holes inside cabinets (which are particularly common in apartments, where plumbers are often rather sloppy) should be blocked, just in case. Also watch out for baseboard heaters and furnace ducts. You can block openings with wood or wire mesh, but be sure to leave adequate ventilation around appliances. For doorways, try a smooth piece of plywood or Plexiglas slid into slots attached to the sides of the doorway; for cabinets, use baby locks. To block the undersides of couches or beds, use wood or heavy fabric, but be sure it's attached securely.

Next, look around the area where your ferret will be playing. Remove anything spongy from reach, and put fragile items out of the way. Keep in mind that many ferrets are good climbers and jumpers, and they excel at finding complicated routes to places you never thought they could reach. They can get onto a sofa, into a trash can, onto the third shelf of a set of bookcases, into a bathtub, into the opening on the back of a stereo speaker, or over the baby gate you thought would keep them in the spare room. They can also unzip backpacks, open cabinets, and climb into some drawers from underneath.

The Plexiglas door barrier. Demonstrated by Pixxel (ferret) and Solo (dog).

Photo by Pam Greene

Apart from obvious dangers such as bottles of household cleaners, which ferrets do sometimes like to drink, be particularly careful with sponges, erasers, shoe insoles, foam earplugs, Silly Putty, foam rubber (even inside a cushion or mattress), Styrofoam, insulation, rubber door stoppers, and anything else spongy or springy. Ferrets love to chew on that kind of thing, and swallowed bits can cause intestinal blockages. For some reason, many ferrets like to eat soap, so you'll have to keep that away from them. Human foods should also be kept out of reach, since even the ones which aren't dangerous to ferrets aren't good for them in large quantities.

Almost every ferret likes to dig in house plants, which can be protected from digging (but not chewing) by putting large rocks or metal mesh over the tops of their pots. If your ferret claws at the carpet, try putting down a piece of plastic carpet protector, cut to fit the affected space and possibly attached to the floor. Chicken wire, ouch-proofed and nailed to the floor using U-nails, can work well too.

Certain ferrets may also have special ferretproofing needs; for example, some like to eat paper, cloth, or plastic bags, which can easily cause a life-threatening intestinal blockage. A few ferrets like to chew on electrical cords or plants, and some common plants are quite poisonous. Liberal application of Bitter Apple paste to the cord or plant can help persuade your pet to stop gnawing on it.

Finally, once your home is done, it's important to keep it safe. Watch your ferret's toys to make sure they're not beginning to crack or break apart, and keep in mind that you can be dangerous to your ferret, too. Always double-check your dishwasher, refrigerator, clothes washer and dryer before closing them or turning them on, and watch where you sit and walk: that chair, throw rug, or pile of laundry might be hiding a napping ferret.

Protecting your ferrets and your home from each other isn't always easy, but it's well worthwhile. The benefits to your ferrets are clear, and you get to enjoy the peace of mind that comes from knowing your pets are safe.

Pam Greene is the author of the Internet list of Ferret Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ), maintainer of the Ferret Central World Wide Web (WWW) site, and secretary of the Western New York and Finger Lakes Ferret Association. She has two ferrets, Pixxel and Rusty, who would love to figure out how to get over the barrier in the doorway to their room. You can contact Pam by email at: <pgreene@optics.rochester.edu>.

READERS: Send us your ferretproofing tips! No house is 100% safe 100% of the time. If you find something new to watch for, why not share it with your fellow ferret lovers? Your experience could help save a ferret's life.

Welcome to "Wide World of Ferrets," our new feature about ferrets in countries other than the United States. If you'd like to share some info on ferrets in foreign lands, please write to us!

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"Rising Ferret In The County Of The Rising Sun"

by Keiko Kojima

It is hard to believe that the history of the pet ferret in Japan is not new. In the past, ferrets were sometimes seen at exotic pet shops where only exotic people used to go. Up until ferrets started receiving national attention last autumn, I was thought to be an exotic person who kept "itachi" (the Japanese word for weasel, which has a negative connotation). I had to use this word because the word "ferret" was not translated back then. Now, the ferret has risen into stardom in a short period of time and may go even beyond Hideo Nomo.

At the time of writing this article, the concept or definition of "companion animal" is still not clearly recognized in Japan. Dogs may have won a status higher than just "pet," but others, including ferrets, still have a way to go. Ferrets have become a gold mine for the pet industry in Japan. However, they remain an exotic animal, shrouded in mystery as far as basic care is concerned. The vital information, i.e., spaying and vaccination, is not well distributed to the retail pet shops. Even vets are trying to get the right information about ferrets. About five years ago, when ferrets were not in fashion, three vets in my neighborhood turned down my ferrets because the vets had no experience with ferrets. Even when I offered literature and other resources (written in English, however), nobody showed an interest in studying ferrets because they were uncommon and did not make much money for the vets.

Before life with ferrets is ready to be enjoyed in Japan, we have a lot to learn. Educating the public is one of the main goals. Right now, the retail ferret business is far ahead of knowledge about ferrets. But when people realize that ferrets are not merely another small exotic animal, but are communicative, entertaining, playful, and responsive to affection, ferrets will truly win the status of a companion animal and stay with us instead of vanishing away as one of the fashionable pets.

Keiko Kojima's parents with the ferrets

児嶋桂子

Keiko Kojima, who has had ferrets for several years, lives in Osaka, Japan.

EDITOR'S NOTE: As Keiko points out, Ferret knowledge in Japan is not well developed. Most veterinarians know very little about ferrets, and there is very little literature about ferrets written in Japanese. Various people in countries that have more ferret information are working to supply that information to interested veterinarians in Japan.

Since this was written, it has come to our attention that the Internet list of ferret Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) has been translated into Japanese (for Japanese computer systems only). For more information about the FAQ, contact Pam Greene via e-mail at:
<pgreene@optics.rochester.edu>.

Ferrets Down Under

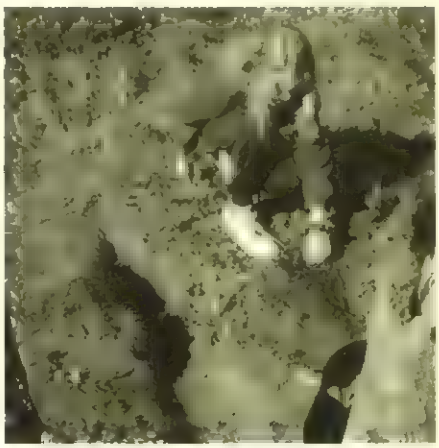
by Nona Langley

Australia's ferret population was first introduced by the early settlers about 200 years ago. The ferrets were used as a deterrent against rodents and especially rabbits, which were also imported from England.

Today, ferrets are still used by farmers to rid properties of rabbits, and city ferrets are often invited to go into the country to help out. The animals are taken to an area where warrens [an underground network of rabbit burrows] have been discovered. One has to approach as silently as possible in order not to scare off the rabbits; special twine nets (or homemade conical wire baskets) are carefully placed over the holes. Once everything has been set up satisfactorily, the ferrets are put down the holes. Occasionally there is a bit of frivolity, with the ferrets popping up out of one hole, then disappearing quickly, only to comically peep up out of another hole several metres away. But most times the ferrets disappear, one hears the frightened thumping of the rabbits, and then there's an explosion of activity. Rabbits come charging out of the exits straight into the nets, hotly pursued by the ferrets. Once freed, the ferrets are sent back down to chase out more rabbits. At the end of the day the farmer has rid his property of some unwanted guests, there's rabbit stew for dinner, and the ferrets have had a mighty workout!

This pastime is not something I choose to indulge in; however, it does seem a far kinder way to handle the burgeoning rabbit population than spreading myxomatosis, which causes a horribly slow, lingering death.

What constitutes a good "working" ferret? Neither colour nor sex seem to be



Putting nets over rabbit holes

important and, surprisingly to me, size doesn't seem to play a great role in the selection either. What counts is speed and a certain decisiveness in the ferret's makeup. The ones that tend to mooch about, taking time to smell the roses so to speak, don't make the team. Neither do those with what might be described as a "killer instinct," as a vicious personality does not make a good hunter.

One of the drawbacks of ferreting is that some of the ferrets, tired after a hard day's work (*yakka* — Australian slang), might just decide to lie down and go to sleep in the burrow. You could be standing over the hole, your squeaky toy going furiously but unheeded thinking that your precious animal has disappeared, only to have it waddle out sleepily after about 8 hours underground! There are radio transmitter collars available which can be fitted onto the ferrets so that if such a thing happens, you merely track your animal then reach for the spade and start to dig it out.

There are hazards in ferreting: poisonous snakes and spiders that might be sharing the warren and, of course, the worry of sarcoptic mange. Another more recent worry for ferreters is the calcicivirus problem that has made its way onto the mainland of Southern Australia. This virus was supposed to have been introduced in a controlled manner in order to eradicate rabbits. However, it is now out of control, and is a worry to all as it can be transmitted by an insect bite. There is no firm evidence on its impact yet and how, if any way, it would affect hunting ferrets.

"Stickfast" fleas are also a concern for working ferrets. These fleas are no bigger than a pinhead and cluster in tight colonies in crevices around the ferret's ears and nose. Eradication is extremely difficult and time-consuming at the best of times.

There also have been reports of working jills losing their kits 4 to 6 weeks after birth — but is it fact or folklore? At the time of writing, we are not sure.

Some working ferrets also have interesting diets. There are country people who give their ferrets day-old chicks — raw. This practice originated in England and, to the best of my knowledge, still applies over there! Another common diet is bread soaked in milk. One wonders what happens to the ferret when its teeth go rotten and fall out from such food, or do the teeth also get a "work out" when it's hunting?

Interestingly, quite a number of the older generation have said that ferreting was one way they (or their parents) managed to feed families during the Depression and War years.

Certainly here in Western Australia the popularity of ferrets as pets has increased dramatically during 1995, with demand exceeding supply. This gives concern about indiscriminate breeding so that people can cash-in on the animal's appeal, but the WA Ferret & Ferreting Society (WAFFS) and The Ferret Centre are working hand-in-hand to counteract any backlash of this sort. The Ferret Centre, the only one of its kind in Australia, works as a ferret "brokerage," putting together suitable people with matching ferrets. The Ferret Centre also provides ferret items (such as *Modern Ferret* magazine) from the USA, England and Holland, as well as producing Australia-made goods such as hand-painted plaques and boxes, etc. Everyone who expresses interest in ferrets gets a comprehensive report on the pros and cons of ferret ownership (I know, there are no "cons" to the old ferret hand; however, we are concerned about "throw-away" pets and don't want people buying a ferret, only to find it bit their child who was covered in chocolate... you know the scenario!). If they are still keen, they get their ferrets and have to join the WAFFS as well. In fact, we really put them through the mill before they even get NEAR a ferret!

Although a great many people still think of ferrets as vicious, smelly, nasty animals, it is very gratifying to be able to change their opinion once they come into contact with our mob. On a Sunday morning we take a couple of our girls for a walk with our 8-year-old Rottweiler and, with the help of a squeaky toy, the three animals make a circuit of the lake. Joggers passing by screech to a stop and, mouths hanging wide open, point and ask "What is that??" "Our ferrets!" we reply smugly. Then we give the spiel to some very amazed people. It's obviously quite a sight to see a 120 lb black Rottweiler trotting with a 1 lb white ferret!

Our first ferret, Mash, a gorgeous, petite Albino, was the mascot for our son's High School hockey team last year and — not surprisingly — every time she was on the sidelines of the pitch, the boys excelled themselves and won the matches! Mash is now gracing the pages of the school's yearbook, and this coming hockey season both our daughters have insisted on a ferret mascot for their teams!

Alexa (No. 1 daughter) with Chucky

Through the Ferret Centre we take our ferrets to primary schools for a show-and-tell session with Grade 1 and 2 children. Moves are afoot to take the ferrets to the local children's hospital so that the sick kids get a little ray of sunshine and fun from these wonderful animals.

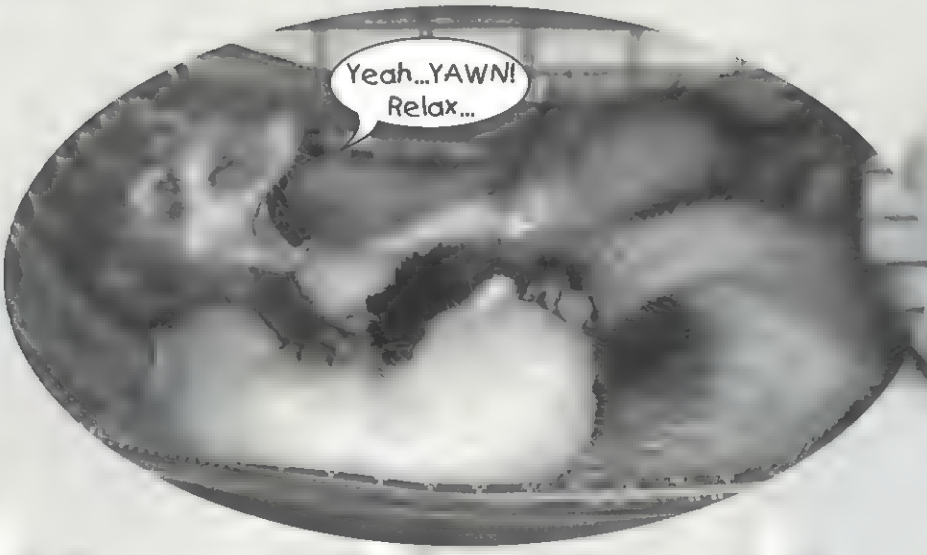
Ferrets are here to stay, they are the ultimate "stress-busters" and, with the right kind of publicity and public awareness, these gorgeous creatures will have a permanent place in the hearts and homes of animal lovers throughout Australia.

Nona Langley is Secretary of the WAFFS and Editor of Ferreting Around, *the Society's newsletter*

The cats (L) Abu and (R) Dhabi waiting for Fidget to finish

RELAX

TAKE TIME TO STOP AND SMELL THE FERRETS



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TRICKS FOR TREATS

Ain't Too Proud To Beg

After listening to several impassioned arguments on either side of the "Ferrets Can/Can't Learn To Do Tricks" debate, we decided to conduct a little experiment with one of our own ferrets.

We chose Ralph because his particular body shape lends itself to sitting up or begging; his body is wide at the butt and it narrows as it proceeds up to his chest. You might say his shape is similar to that of any of your garden variety Weebles. But, while his body is well designed for sitting up, his lack of hearing creates a less-than-ideal situation for the teaching/learning process. Or does it? I've noticed that Ralph's attention span and intensity of concentration seem to be a little better than those of a hearing ferret. (Of course, Sabrina can also sit up when she feels like it and she's much more slender and she can hear.)

Anyway, this is what we did ...

After Ralph had run down a bit and was calm — but not too sleepy — we separated him from the other ferrets. We used a treat that he really likes (Ferretbites). You can use whatever your ferret likes best. To help keep things moving along, we broke up the treat into several smaller pieces that he could eat with just a few chews. This way we were able to get him to do the trick several times in the space of 5 minutes.

We started by standing far enough away from Ralph to prevent him from leaning on us (about a foot). We showed Ralph the treat (usually right in front of his nose), then held it up over his head. If he tried to lean on us, we'd gently push him back and try again. Whenever he successfully sat up without trying to climb us to get to the treat, we gave him the treat (yum!).

Meanwhile, we worked on teaching him a command so he could do the trick whether or not he got a treat. In many cases, saying the word "up" each time you hold the treat over your ferret's head will help your ferret associate the word with the action. However, since Ralph can't hear (or read lips), we had to come up with something different. We chose a simple hand signal. Using an index finger, we made an upward motion. At first, we'd hold the treat in the same hand we were using to make the motion. That got Ralph's attention on the hand doing the signaling. Eventually, Ralph started to sit up in response to the finger motion alone, even though the treat was not visible.

After only a few of these 5-minute sessions, Ralph was begging for treats left and right. Now, if you signal him with your finger, he'll sit up. If you look at him, he'll sit up. Even the other ferrets are trying to get in on the game. But only Ralph truly knows what he's doing — and why. (The others are just copy-ferrets.)

Ralph just stands around...

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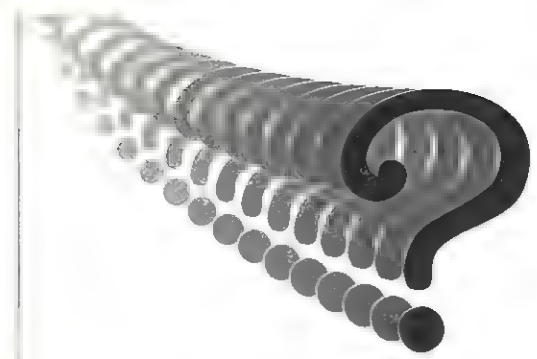

The Doctor Replies

The Doctor Is In™ - Installment #5

By David Kupersmith, D.V.M.

Over the past four issues, we have taken a rather broad view of the ferret throughout its life stages, starting with your new ferret and continuing through the aging pet. In this issue, I am going to take time to answer a few questions from readers.

One reader writes that he has a 7-year-old ferret diagnosed with an adrenal tumor; exhibiting "fur loss and swelling of the vulva." The doctor said the ferret was too old for treatment.

The decision whether a ferret is a candidate for surgery does not rest solely on age. A 7-year-old ferret may, in fact, be a better surgical candidate than a 4-year old. I have operated with great success on older ferrets for adrenal tumors and pancreatic tumors. Determining factors are body condition (indicated by weight, appetite, and activity levels) and organ function (represented by chemistry profiles). If I feel a ferret is capable of handling surgery and has a good chance of returning to normal health, I will offer surgery as an option to the owner. As a pet owner, you then have to decide whether you want to put an aging ferret through surgery. Certainly a 7-year-old ferret is not going to live many more years, but many people are happy that surgery may improve the quality of life during that time.

As a doctor, I do not feel that it is solely my decision to perform the surgery. What I try to do is present the facts on all possible options, so that the pet owner can make as informed a decision as possible. Having said this, I will note that not all tumors are operable (regardless of age). Some neoplasias are more responsive to chemotherapeutic modalities rather than surgery.

The same reader asks "when treating the condition (hyperadrenocorticism), how early is early?" The answer to this depends on the exam and tests available at the time. To me, the limiting factor is the size of the normal adrenal gland. A normal ferret adrenal gland is 2 mm or less. An enlarged gland may therefore be as small as 4 mm. This is so small that the enlargement can be missed with an ultrasonic exam if early in the course of the disease. While there is now a blood test available to measure increases in estradiol (the hormone that increases in this disease), the test will not indicate which gland is involved. If I suspect an adrenal tumor, I may have an owner come in for recheck exams on a monthly or bimonthly basis until I feel the clinical signs are more likely to go along with a detectable tumor. At this point some doctors may choose to perform an ultrasound to detect which gland is involved. Even if the ultrasound exam is normal, I may recommend surgery as I can sometimes feel a change in the firmness of the gland prior to a dramatic increase in size. To sum it up — early is that point at which I feel that I have a good chance of locating the affected gland. In other words, early is a subjective, not an objective, interpretation.

Another reader asks: "If a ferret has an enlarged spleen, are there any medications available for this disorder? Also when is the appropriate time to spay and descent a female ferret?"

To answer the first question, not only is there not a specific medicine available, but an enlarged spleen is not necessarily a sign of disease. More than half of the ferrets seen in my practice have some degree of splenomegaly (enlargement of the spleen). The majority of those do not have any disease. In any mammal, a splenic enlargement can be associated with a benign condition, not only with disease or neoplasm. If there are no signs of illness, I will note the splenic enlargement and follow it along in future visits. Only if signs are seen will I pursue an enlarged spleen.

As to the second question: The majority of ferrets sold on the market today are spayed and descented at 6 weeks of age (or less) by the commercial breeding farms. If you are lucky enough to procure a ferret from a private breeder, I recommend spaying between 4 and 6 months of age. The benefit of descenting is the subject of much discussion. The ferret's odor does not arise only from the "scent glands" or anal sacs; much of the odor is from the sebaceous glands located over the whole body. The scent glands are partially hormone-responsive, so spaying or castrating a ferret will reduce the odor from the scent glands. Additionally, bathing every other week in a gentle shampoo will control the odor from the sebaceous glands. Frequently washing the ferret's bedding also helps reduce odor. At this time, I am not descenting ferrets and the pet owners have still noticed a good level of odor control following neutering. (I'm sure this comment will spur a few letters — we'll report on the consensus of opinion in a future issue.)

Questions can be sent to me via letters or e-mail direct to *Modern Ferret*. I will occasionally take time from the regular format to answer them on this page. Previous columns can be found on the World Wide Web.

Previous *The Doctor Is In* columns can be found on the *Modern Ferret* World Wide Web Site:

http://www.modernferret.com

http://www.csc.peachnet.edu/~rpoore/Ferrets/intro.html

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Lee Donehower
(President, LOS Nebraska)

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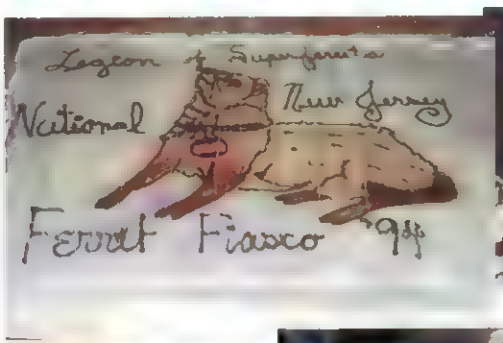
Rose Smith, President

THE STORY OF

THE LEGION OF SUPERFERRETS



If humans have Superman and mice have Mighty Mouse, who will save the day and preserve truth and justice for ferrets? Ask Rose Smith, President of Legion of Superferrets National, and she'll tell you it's Rockyman (the super-ferret)! With divisions in various states throughout the country (and several more in the works in other countries), LOS takes an approach to the concept of a "national" club that's slightly different from that of any other national ferret organization. "We created the state divisions so that people would, within their state boundaries, have a closer contact to us. Someone more in their immediate area to reach," explains Rose. "We really want to make sure that people can get first-hand information and assistance. We try not to abandon anyone."

ABLE TO LEAP TALL PREJUDICES

Before Rose's youngest daughter talked her into getting her a ferret as a birthday present, Rose was the typical mother who had the typical mother's reaction to ferrets: "Yech!" The ferrets she had encountered had been smelly, and she couldn't stand the thought of that smell being in her house. All it took was a little positive interaction with some cute little fuzzballs and Rose's life would never be the same. After handling a few baby ferrets, Rose asked if they had any girl ferrets. "They came down with a tiny ferret that fit in the palm of my hand and told me it was about 16 weeks old. Her eyes were slits. Later I realized that she was at most 5 weeks old. That's a far cry from 16 weeks. But that's what started it. Then I couldn't stand seeing her all by herself and got another ferret."

If not for Rose's deep concern about animals, her ferret adventure might have stopped there. But when she discovered that her local Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) didn't try to place abandoned ferrets, but instead destroyed them, she was compelled to get into ferret rescue work. "I couldn't see putting down a healthy animal just because someone decided they didn't want it," she says. The more she learned about ferrets, the more she realized they needed her help. For example, Rose doesn't approve of the large breeder farms' practice of early altering ferrets (kits arrive in pet stores at 6 to 8 weeks old, already altered and healed from the surgery) and she makes no bones — or apologies — about it. Rose believes the breeder farms'

THE LEGION OF SUPERFERRETS

In California

Owning a ferret in California is illegal, but the owners of an estimated 500,000 ferrets think their furry kids are worth the risk. For those who defy the law, getting information on basic ferret care such as what to feed, how to bathe, and how to clip nails can be a challenge. Although there are two ferret groups in California — the California Domestic Ferret Association (CDFA) and Ferrets Anonymous (FA) — their focus is legalization. These groups can refer ferret owners to a veterinarian or answer questions regarding ferret care, but the lion's share of their funds, time, and energy goes to the fight to make ferrets legal.

Enter Cynthia Orander and Dean Karengin. These two established the California division of Legion of Superferrets (LOS) to address education. Period. There was some initial resistance, but LOS CA made clear that it is not involved with the legalization efforts beyond supporting CDFA and FA. In fact, LOS CA recommends joining one or both of the legalization groups. "Both groups are doing a phenomenal job. I couldn't have done it better myself; that's why I won't get involved," says Cynthia.

Dean Karengin

What she does get involved with is distributing ferret information to veterinarians, pet stores, and any "closet" (or would-be) ferret owner who asks. The information takes several forms: a bimonthly newsletter, updates on CDFA and FA, health alerts, care tips, and nutrition information, to name a few. The LOS CA education campaign requires a lot of travel, Cynthia explains: "We probably do state end to state end every couple of weeks." They stop at between 200 and 300 stores and veterinary offices in the course of a four-day weekend. "We introduce ourselves and give them information. We tell them to call us if they have any questions. We just want to get out there."

Mostly the response they get is positive. Veterinarians usually respond enthusiastically. "We're handing them videos and books, so they take us seriously right off," Cynthia says. Nearly everyone is happy to receive information about ferrets. "Hopefully, I can make an impact on how these little guys are taken care of and I can make sure vets know how to treat them," she says. "I want people to enjoy their pets."

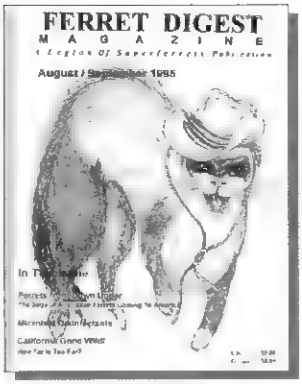
Cynthia, who has always had a keen interest in animals, discovered ferrets when she was about 10 years old: "I thought they were these completely exotic animals that had wonderful personalities." Back then, she had wanted to become a vet, something she is currently pursuing by taking veterinary courses. "I plan on being a vet. It's a big jump from being a banker, but it's my first love," she explains.

Cynthia and Dean met Rose Smith and LOS on the American Online computer service. They were already thinking about starting a local ferret club and they liked the fact that LOS is a recognizable name. They were also impressed with Rose's sensitivity towards ferrets: "I just fell in love with her love for the animals." After some extensive screening, Rose decided that Cynthia and Dean would be good representatives of LOS. "She made sure that we loved the animals the way she did," Cynthia says. With Rose's help, they are able to give Fox's *Biology and Diseases of the Ferret* to any vet who asks for it. Aside from that, Rose has very little to do with LOS CA. They keep in touch via e-mail. "Being an LOS division is not about rules and regulations; it's about having the same goals, the same objectives, and the same overall view of how we want ferrets to be perceived and how to take care of them."

LOS CA is available 24 hours a day. They have an on-call vet and can also offer vet referrals. As is common with LOS, they also try to keep things somewhat lighthearted: "Owning a ferret is a fun thing to do. That's why we got the animals in the first place."

Contact LOS CA at 1154 Del Monte Ave, Monterey CA 93940; 408-646-1148; internet: losca@aol.com. Membership is $30.00 per year. Remember, LOS CA respects your anonymity and will never ask you if you own ferrets.

Cynthia Orander



concern about the general public being irresponsible about neutering ferrets is better addressed with educational efforts, and not by altering the ferrets before they are sold. "I'm a rabble rouser. When I see something that needs to be done, I make noise. I get people to join in with me," says Rose.

With basic education about ferrets as her focus, Rose began seeking out other ferret owners. One of the places she looked was an on-line computer service. She started up a topic heading about ferrets and soon met several like-minded ferret owners. "We decided we should start a club and we should educate people," she says. The original idea of starting a local club met with some resistance from an existing club in Pennsylvania. Not one for taking No for an answer, Rose thought about the locations of the people who were interested in starting the club: Washington state, Colorado, Florida, and Rose herself in Pennsylvania. "We were touching almost four corners of the United States," she says. So they decided to start a national club. Of the original five people who founded Legion of Superferrets National, three are left: Sharon Bowman (Vice President) in Washington and Amy Kielbasinski (Comptroller) and Rose (President) in Pennsylvania.

"I started with Rose from the ground floor of LOS, and it was a blast from the very start to where we are now," says Sharon. Sharon is currently the Advisor to LOS WA (also called the Ferret City Fan Club); the president of LOS WA is Lance Brooks. One of the reasons Sharon got involved with Rose and the others was that she felt isolated; there was no one to talk to about how to properly care for her ferrets. This sentiment is echoed by Lee Donehower, President of the Nebraska division of LOS. Through the America Online computer service, Lee met Rose and the others. "Nebraska can be a lonely place with respect to what's going on in the rest of the nation," says Lee. The kind of isolation Sharon and Lee describe is not uncommon in areas where no ferret clubs exist and is one of the problems LOS seeks to solve by having state divisions.

THE FIGHT FOR TRUTH

Perhaps the most important goal of the Legion of Superferrets is education of ferret owners and non-ferret owners alike. LOS distributes a pamphlet entitled "Care and Keeping of Domestic Ferrets," which discusses some of the basics. "To me, LOS stands for education for the ferret owner or soon-to-be ferret owner," comments Sharon Bowman. Rose stresses the importance of making good, current information available to the public. "A happy and informed person makes a happy owner; an informed person makes the pet a happy pet," she explains.

But sometimes a ferret owner needs to talk directly to a more experienced ferret owner. "I'm usually available on the phone just about 24 hours a day," says Rose. Sharon points out, "With LOS, if I don't know the answer to a question for someone, I just get on the phone and ask someone who knows. We have a great bunch of people and they are very knowledgeable on ferrets." Adds Lee Donehower, "The LOS family has become my own family and I regularly phone Rose in Pennsylvania and Sharon in Seattle just to chat." This virtual round-the-clock availability is one of the attractions that draws ferret owners to the group.

LOS tries to offer various services to its members through each of the state divisions. Rose finds ways to assist with lowering the cost of spaying/neutering through the Pennsylvania division and she encourages each of the state divisions to make similar arrangements. "We suggest to the state divisions that they find veterinarians who can work with them to make sure that any ferrets that are bred outside of the farms be altered when they reach about six months." Divisions are also urged to follow through with ferret owners. It isn't always enough to simply answer questions, sometimes one has to offer advice and information *before* the question is asked. Rose asks the state divisions to stick with ferret owners who seem unsure of themselves. "Groups for animals only work for dogs and cats. Somebody's got to work for the ferrets," Rose says.

The LOS state divisions have a fair amount of autonomy in how they are run. It's more important for them to follow the guiding principles of LOS, mainly educating and making themselves available to any ferret owner (or future ferret owner) who might need help and information. For example, LOS divisions can provide the name of a good ferret-friendly veterinarian or suggest an up-to-date book. In addition, most of the LOS state divisions hold meetings. In Alaska, Rose says, "they not only have a monthly meeting, but they also have the local radio station attend. They actually live broadcast their meeting, which is really something exciting."

LOS's education campaign includes donating the latest books on ferrets to local libraries, "just so some of the old garbage is put to rest," Rose says. For example, the first book about ferrets Rose had read said that ferrets don't climb so they don't need a cover on their cage. Wrong. Never passing up an opportunity to share her beliefs about ferrets, Rose adds, "I believe ferrets should be caged when not supervised — for their own safety — because of their extremely curious nature. A ferret is very much the equivalent of a two-year-old human child with four feet and a fur coat. That's exactly how they act. I wouldn't leave a two-year-old child unattended either."

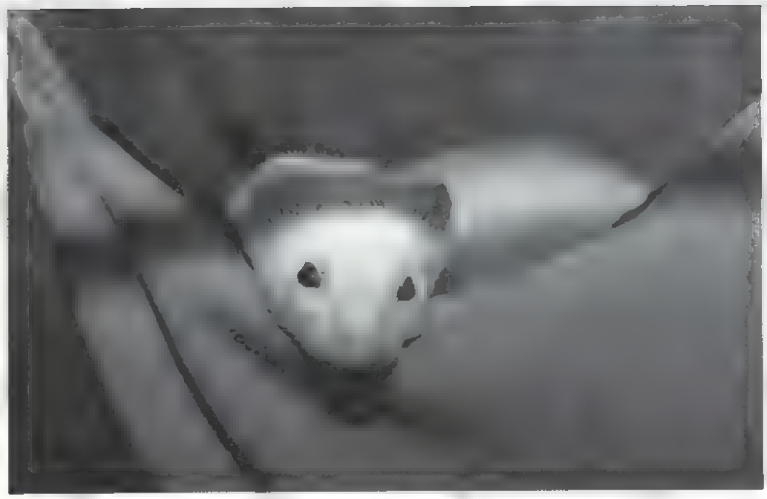
Rose isn't the only one who sees ferrets as the equivalent of a two-year-old child. Most ferret owners who've encountered a toddler or two will agree with Rose's description. This is another area where LOS tries to help the ferret owner. LOS acknowledges that although educating ferret owners is a serious business, a little silliness can help in accepting ferrets' sometimes annoying antics and curiosity. Rose explains, "We make little jokes about them so that we can laugh at the otherwise annoying behavior. Such as ferrets digging at your plants: They're not trying to be mean, they're looking for Rootman because Rootman is evil and can harm your plants."

As for legal issues, Rose says that LOS supports any group that has a good concept for legality. "We were right in the thick of things with Michigan. We were involved with Massachusetts. And we've got both boots stuck into California." She adds, "Our California group, although the members don't have ferrets because ferrets are still illegal in CA, is an interested activist group. LOS CA is in support of the two legal-minded groups out there [The California Domestic Ferret Association and Ferrets Anonymous] and is working to help free ferrets." [Read more about LOS CA on page 19.]

SHELTERING

Since most SPCAs don't have the

Pet-of-the-Month



I'm just little...

KNUKS

Interests/Hobbies: I love burrowing into sweaters — it doesn't matter if someone's already in them. Paper sliding (Ralph and I have so much fun skidding through the papers and magazines on the floor!). Bugging other ferrets. I love to have temper tantrums (it makes my mom soooooo mad!). I like to meet people, especially children 'cause they're closer to my size. I'm also a bit of a snoop, but I do it very charmingly so no one objects.

Vital Statistics

Name: Knuks (pronounced "nuks" — it's "skunk" spelled backwards)
Color: White with some black hairs. I used to be white with a black stripe on my back, but I think one of the other ferrets stole my stripe.
Age: 12 weeks old (when the photo was taken), now I'm 13 months old.
Sex: Female
Length: 14 Inches, not counting my tail (currently)
Tail: 5 Inches (currently)
Girth: 7.5 Inches (currently)
Weight: 1.75 Pounds (currently)
Eyes: Ruby (they look black, but there's really some red in them)

I'm perky!

I used to have a stripe...

Favorite Color: I don't discriminate; I like all colors.
Favorite Movies: I just love movies! These are some of my faves — "Where the Hobs Are"; "Invasion of the Leather-Snatchers"; and "Raisin Man."
Favorite Songs of All Time: "You've Got To Hide Your Toys Away" (the Beatles — aka, the Fab Furo); "All The Young Kits" (Mustelid the Hoople); and "Moods for Modern Ferrets" (Elvis Mustello and the Attractions)
Occupation: Some of the positions I hold are Spokes-Ferret, Ferret Princess Supreme, and Brat. I also do a little demolition work on the side.

Why I Posed: For posterity. I suspected someone might steal my stripe. And now it looks like I've also been robbed of the patch of black on my tail. I'm practically all white now! I like to remember the days when people would stop and stare at the stripe on my back and call me "unusual." I'm really glad I posed for these photos when I was a kit. Besides, my public wanted it, and I must give the ferrets what they want.
Turn-On's: Noses (I just love to lick 'em!), shoes, forbidden things, treats, my little stuffed ferret toy.
Turn-Off's: Bitter Apple (yuck!!!), toothpaste (fresh breath in general), cages, litterboxes, baths.

America's Favorite Cookie!
OREO
Chocolate Sandwich Cookies

Baby Knuks ©1996 Crunchy Concepts Inc. Photo by Eric Shefferman.
Oreo® is a trademark of Nabisco®. And they taste good! Yum!
Modern Ferret is a trademark of Crunchy Concepts Inc. All rights reserved.

knowledge or the facilities to take care of ferrets, shelters that specifically take care of ferrets are needed. "Most of the LOS state positions that have opened up have become shelters, which is nice. We're all working out there." Rose currently works with SPCAs in NJ and PA, supplying them with information and answering their questions. She also helps place the ferrets the SPCAs get in: "We get calls from them if they get ferrets in, and we let people on our waiting lists know and they make a mad dash to go adopt. Or, if the SPCA prefers, we pick the ferret up."

LOS helps other shelters in the United States with its Shelter Helper fund. Money in this fund is strictly for use by troubled, non-LOS shelters in the United States. There's a check-box on the LOS membership application for donations to the fund. LOS also supports the Morris Foundation and the rabies shed study.

Like most clubs and shelters, LOS sells various ferret-related items to help support its educational and shelter efforts. Rose says that Amy Kielbasinski is not only "a fun lady," she's also the creative mind of the group. "She realized that ferrets need creature comforts and she created her Slinky Sleeper line." All the items that LOS offers for sale are ferret tested. They make sure it's not only safe for ferrets (e.g., their nails can't get caught in the fabric), but also wears well. "We put her stuff through the paces because we want to be sure it's safe for ferrets," explains Rose. Profits from a new LOS product — a full-color 1996 calendar — will go to the Shelter Helper fund. "It came out really nice," Rose says of the calendar, which is currently available for $9.50 (postage included).

IT'S SHOW TIME!

Ferret shows are not only a good excuse for a social gathering, they're another way LOS reaches out to the public. LOS shows have fun competitions, like longest tail or best dressed, as well as championship rings scored within the LIFE (League of Independent Ferret Enthusiasts) point system. "We have fun. We play fun games," says Rose. Vendors, clubs, and shelters sell various ferret items. Those who are ready to bring home a new friend can adopt a homeless ferret from a shelter or buy a kit from a top private breeder. There are hand-outs and lots of experienced ferret owners to help educate anyone who wants to know more about ferrets. There's a rabies clinic for anyone who was unaware that ferrets need vaccinations. A ferret-knowledgeable veterinarian is on-hand to answer questions and examine ferrets.

An upcoming ferret event that Sharon Bowman is very excited about is an LOS WA show on August 24th. It will be the first-ever LIFE show on the West Coast. Stay tuned for details. The next LOS National show will be an "all specialty" show in mid-March. Contact LOS National for the exact date and other particulars.

LOS also meets and educates the public at pet expositions. "I usually take whole hobs with me to help dispel the misconception that intact, breeding males are mean and nasty critters," Rose says. "They are territorial. But outside of their body scent being stronger to let the females know that they're ready for mating, they're just like anybody else." Rose refers to her hobs as "big hush puppies that just love being man-handled." The ferrets love meeting all sorts of people and getting all sorts of attention. Of course, Rose gives them time out to eat, drink, and use the litter box.

WHO'S THE GUY WITH THE CAPE?

Rocky had been an ordinary ferret until Rose and the original LOS crew were goofing around on the computer, animating their ferrets. Someone suggested putting Rocky in a red body suit. The silliness heightened until "Rockyman" was born. "Amy actually designed the costume to fit our description," says Rose. But why Rocky? "He didn't mind people putting clothes on his body." Rocky likes wearing hats. He is, as Rose explains, much like the kid's classic kitten that lets you dress him up and drag him everywhere. Very simply, Rocky tolerates the dress-up. "He became an automatic candidate. Kind of like 'oh good, you stay still — you're it!'"

According to Rose, Rockyman appears by request at many functions. If Rockyman is going to be at a particular ferret affair, it can help persuade the local TV stations to show up. "He's a celebrity and he's a camera hound. If he knows you're going to take a picture, he strikes a pose," Rose says. Rocky serves as excellent PR for ferrets. His sweet and cuddly disposition helps Rose dispel the myths that ferrets are mean or vicious. As Rose cleverly puts it, "Something that's going to eat you alive, you can't dress up. I've never seen a tiger with a baby hat on. But Rocky will do it." 'Nuff said.

FERRET DIGEST MAGAZINE

No organization is complete without a publication. LOS has *Ferret Digest Magazine*. The bimonthly *Digest* keeps members up-to-date on what's happening in the ferret world. It covers the usual LOS-related happenings, like reviews of shows and a run-down of future events — those sponsored by LOS as well as other ferret groups. There's medical information and stories of ferret owners' experiences (both good and bad). "It's all a learning process, and we can learn best from each other," Rose, Editor of the *Digest*, points out. Rose constantly strives to improve the *Digest* and keep the focus on the domestic ferret. "People want to sit down and read something that they can understand, something that relates to what they've got."

In the past year, several of the *Digest's* covers have been color Xeroxed, instead of just black and white. Recently, Rose started copying the *Digest* "in-house" (actually in her home-office) on the enormous copier that takes up a whole wall and that Amy refers to as the "great gray elephant."

LOS's charitable work also reaches into the realm of the *Digest*. Quite a few veterinarians across the United States receive the *Digest* free of charge. Many of them have written to Rose to express their appreciation for the "Vets N Pets" section. Vets can make photocopies of relevant articles for their ferret-owning clients. Rose makes sure that the vets who write for the *Digest* keep their articles in layman's terms so they're appropriate for ferret owners and veterinarians alike.

LOS INTERNET

The popularity of computers and the Internet has given LOS yet another opportunity to locate and educate ferret owners. Ferret owners can find a wealth of ferret information on American Online (AOL), a consumer on-line computer service. "I started on AOL in 1990, and there was me and a vet — that's all," Rose says. She got several people whom she had met on other services to join AOL. When Rose asked AOL to set aside an area for ferrets, they told her she could have a space in the Exotic Pets area of the Pet Care Forum. "I begged AOL to please let us take

the ferrets out of Exotic Pets, and they said that if I could build up the ferret membership on AOL that I could have my way." She did, and the area was renamed Small Mammals & Exotic Pets. The AOL ferret area is open to anyone who wants to learn more or share their experiences about ferrets; you need not be a member of LOS. As more people found their way to the ferret area on AOL, it became apparent that the area needed more direction. "I was elected to take over on the ferret section," she says. This was when Rose and the other ferret lovers on-line started the AOL Ferret Chats. It was at these Ferret Chats that Lee Donehower (President, LOS NE) met Rose and found out about LOS. "LOS was the first organization I encountered while exploring AOL, and happily I discovered that they ran a Ferret Chat at which I could get answers to questions in real time," Lee says.

At first, the chats took place once a month in a general "chat room." Eventually, AOL provided a chat room specifically for the Pet Care Forum. This chat room is where the Ferret Chats (as well as chats about other animals) take place. The frequency of the Ferret Chats has increased: first to twice a month, and now to once a week (Saturdays at 10 PM Eastern Time). "We get somewhere between 35 and 50 people each week," Rose says. All the scheduled Ferret Chats are logged, Rose edits them, and they are put into the Chat Libraries for anyone to download.

Ferret lovers can also find LOS on the World Wide Web. The LOS Web site is called FerretWorld and is jointly supported by LOS, STAR Ferrets (Shelters That Adopt and Rescue Ferrets), and LIFE. FerretWorld has information for ferret owners as well as an electronic membership form for LOS so people can initiate membership through the Web site. FerretWorld was created and is operated by Roger Poor, who is an LOS member. Rose commends Roger's work on the Web site: "He does a wonderful job. He puts all his heart and soul into it." FerretWorld has links to many of the other ferret-related sites on the World Wide Web. "It's nice to find that all the ferret groups want to link in together on the Web," Rose says. FerretWorld's Web address is: **http://www.csc.peachnet.edu/~rpoore/Ferrets/intro.html**

COMING TO AMERICA

On July 15, 1995, three years after the idea first sparked, LOS brought ferrets from Australia to the United States. "It was a lot of time," Rose says. Other ferret groups had looked into importing ferrets from Australia, but gave up on the idea when they were told it couldn't be done. (These ferret groups looked instead to European countries for ferrets to import to the United States.) So how did LOS accomplish this trans-Pacific feat? "I'm just a little more stubborn," Rose says, "and I knew I had the right idea." The "right" idea started with this: Rose was very upset about how many ferrets were dying at much too young an age — certainly younger than most of their European counterparts. She attributes the shorter life-span, in part, to a great deal of inbreeding and line-breeding in the United States. This has partially contributed to the problem of not being able to track the bloodlines and, therefore, any genetic weaknesses. Rose started to look into how to counteract the situation. That's when the idea of bringing in new bloodlines from Australia arose. "It's the only time it's ever been done," she declares.

In the three years from germination to fruition, there was an awful lot of talking, convincing, begging, and pleading. "There has to be an easier way," Rose says. They had to find several breeders in Australia so ferrets from several different bloodlines could be imported. It was difficult to get the ferrets out of Australia due to export regulations. Arranging for the transport by air through California (where ferrets are illegal) into the United States was a logistical challenge. The ferrets had to re-routed through Hawaii. Although the concept of ferrets as pets is gaining popularity in Australia, they are still used for ferreting (flushing rabbits from their holes). Thus, ferrets are kept differently than they're kept in the United States. This led to the ferrets arriving with poor ... errr ... potty manners, among other things.

A group of five breeders has set up a closed breeding program for the Australian ferrets. For the first two years, they'll breed Australian ferrets to Australian ferrets. After two years they'll introduce the Australian bloodlines into the American. Rose explains the rationale for this procedure: "If you only have a couple and you start breeding them into the American line it would be like a drop in the ocean. It does nothing. If you take a whole bucket and drop it in the ocean, you'll make a ripple." Keeping the colonies closed for two years will also help in keeping track of which pairs of ferrets have been mated.

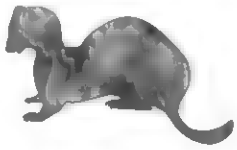
THE FUTURE OF LOS

Where does LOS go from here? Rose says they'll continue to reach out to ferret owners everywhere who need information. They've started reaching into Japan. "We have a couple members in Japan. Our plans are to eventually offer the *Ferret Digest* bilingual, which we're working on." A member in the United States who is Japanese will help with translating and deciding whether Japanese characters will be necessary.

There are opportunities to reach into France and Sweden within the coming year. "We're taking it very slowly. I take this extremely seriously," says Rose. She takes her time in choosing key people to run state divisions.

Rose says she has begun to see some things for ferrets improving. "I've been yelling and screaming for a good number of years now," she says. "Pet food companies are now realizing that they actually have to formulate a food for ferrets. They can't just take a cat product and slap a label on it. Products are coming. Grooming products, toys — you name it, it's showing up." But there's always more to do.

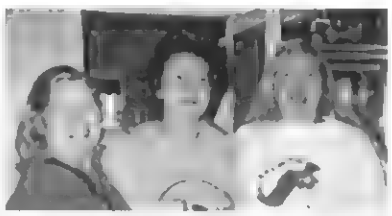
Why would someone go to all this trouble for a little ball of fur? Rose says it best: "Ferrets make us laugh. And what's the best medicine in the world? Laughter. Think about it, when you're feeling down, what do you? Go play with a ferret."



Membership in LOS is $30.00 per year and includes the *Ferret Digest*. For more information, contact LOS National or your local state division (see the resource chart on page 17).

To order the 1996 LOS ferret calendar, send $8.00 + $1.00 S&H (total = $9.50) to LOS National, PO Box 866, Levittown PA 19058.

For information on the League of Independent Ferret Enthusiasts (LIFE), write to: LIFE, 9330 Old Burke Lake Rd., Burke VA 22015



Amy Kielbasinski, Sharon Bowman, and Rose Smith

George Parker with things in his head...

The American Connection

(The Invasion of the Body Snatchers)

By George Parker

How is it that the mind and body of an ordinary, boring individual living quietly and peacefully on the outskirts of London can be taken over by an alien invader? It's all the fault of *Modern Ferret*. It's very spooky how small and seemingly unconnected events lead one along like links in a chain. Let me explain ...

In the summer of 1994, I was wandering around a large pet store with my girlfriend Karen, a few miles from where we live. Suddenly she said to me, "Hey, there's some ferret stuff over here!" When I went over to look, I saw that there was a small display of Eight in One ferret products. There were some leaflets near the products, so I took one to read. I happen to be the Treasurer of the Essex Ferret Welfare Society, and I also order and purchase the various ferret items that the Society sells. I thought that these vitamin products would be a very good line to carry, but unfortunately there was no address for the UK distributor.

A few days later, I telephoned Eight in One in New York and got the name of the distributor over here. The products were ordered, and I wrote an article in the Society newsletter to let the members know that the products were available.

Around Christmastime, I had a phone call from Devon from a young lady who asked if I knew of any ferret magazines to which she could subscribe. I told her that I didn't know of any here in the UK. She then asked if I could find out through my connections in America if there were any magazines there, and details of how she could subscribe. (What "connections" in America? First I'd heard of this American Connection! All I'd done was phone Eight in One!)

Anyway, I asked around and telephoned some people that I knew in Scotland. I knew that they were swapping newsletters with a couple of American ferret clubs, but no joy. A few weeks later, they sent me one of the *Modern Ferret* flyers they had received. Next link in the chain, and a pivotal one at that, as all that followed emanated from this: I telephoned Mary Shefferman.

Holly, Hector, Heather, and Basil (Chessy's brother)

Eddy and Georgina May's first ferret, Jasper

Basil and Catherine May

Photos by Georgina and Eddy May of Chigwell, Essex, UK

Hector — a British Chap

In the UK, there isn't much known about the ferret scene in America. Some people over here don't know too much about America, and there are others who still wonder whether the cucumber sandwiches served at the Boston Tea Party were on white or brown bread. Little did I know that all that was about to change for me!

I had a nice chat with Mary, and a week or so later the post brought me several copies of *Modern Ferret* issue number 1 and confirmation of the cost for UK subscribers. I duly arranged subscriptions for myself and the young lady from Devon, settled back and thought that life would return to normal. But no!!

One evening in late April, the telephone rang. I sometimes get fed up with the telephone and leave my answering machine on, this was one of those times.

Susan Morrow singing sensation...

The British Connection

(The Alien Replies)

By Susan Morrow

It started with a little nudge...

Neal Segal received an invitation to study architecture in England for the summer. England. I had heard that ferrets in the United Kingdom were bigger and heartier than any in the United States. And I wanted one. I didn't think this would be too difficult. First, I had to get a British contact, someone near London, who could assist in making the arrangements and talk to the other UK clubs. *Modern Ferret* helped fill this order, having recently received a call from a man in England named George Parker. Perfect, I thought. The contact was made, and a friendly one at that.

It was a bit odd talking to George, particularly about the colors they recognize over there: Polecat (Sable), Albino (pronounced "albeeno"), and Sandy or Colored (everything else). Well, I had seen the Polecat and Albino, so Sandy sounded like a perfect color for me.

After some research, it was confirmed that English ferrets have a much lower incidence of cancers and other illnesses which seem to have become commonplace here in the United States. In fact, it seems that many British ferrets commonly live 9+ years, with some reaching up to 14 years. This was great news.

To avoid appearing completely selfish, I decided to let a few others in on my plans. The offer to acquire a British ferret was extended to only a few breeders — after all, I didn't want to overwhelm my contacts all at once. But before anyone knew it, the count was up to 21 ferrets.

Neal visited George first, and picked out three ferrets. At the time, they were only 5 weeks old. The litter had been picked up from a farmer who no longer wanted the ferrets. He had left the hob with the jill to help raise the kits. The two seemed to be doing well with this arrangement, much to everyone's surprise. The three ferrets Neal selected were held (including the Sandy for me) until they were ready to be shipped home.

After a lot of time and energy, it seemed that all was set. Or so I thought. It seems that Bandette (appropriately named) took a sudden interest in the airline ticket and the directions to George's house (I found them behind the couch in her favorite spot). Both items had to be replaced. And Bandette had to be reminded of who is in charge.

Then the waiting game began. Neal brought the ferrets to the airport, which was no easy task. The ferrets were eating a mountain of food every few hours, and those same mountains seemed to reappear in the back of the cage all too quickly. The ferrets would be spending a total of 12 hours with the airline. They were stocked with food and water, and more was waiting for them when they came through customs. It was agreed that the ferrets — including my Sandy — would go through a voluntary 30-day quarantine. My Sandy has since been named Chessy (short for The Cheshire Cat). He was the largest of the group, and he liked to bounce around the room laughing like a Cheshire Cat, thus the name seemed apt.

The ferrets were staying at the home of Georgia Bailey, a long-time breeder in Virginia. In the first week the ferrets went through over 40 lbs of kibble. To ensure a smooth dietary transition, their diet was supplemented with cooked chicken, raw beef heart, and hard boiled eggs. In England, the ferrets were fed an all-meat diet (whole rabbit, day-old chicks, mice etc.), with kibble used only as a supplement. The stories of their adventures over the next 30 days were endless. Chessy seemed to be quite an active one, who made sure to give Georgia at least one adventure a day for the diary.

Shortly before the ferrets were to be released from quarantine, some of them seemed to have a small reaction to the microchip that had been implanted while they were in England. (Yes, all of the original 21 were "chipped" so they could be identified while they were in England.) However, with a little antibiotics and some time, all was well.

Finally, day 30 had arrived, and my Chessy was coming home. I had heard so many stories, and I couldn't wait to meet him. Sue finally arrived after a long trip home from Virginia. There he was, in the light of the living room; he looked so strong and handsome. He took my breath away. Then he came up to me and whispered in my ear. I melted. I had waited so long to hear that British accent, and finally I got to hear it.

My very devious and carefully orchestrated plot had played out exactly as I planned. The human hosts suited my purposes well. They never suspected who was controlling their every thought and deed. I wanted to do something that would change the world of ferrets in the United States forever. I wanted a British cagemate. Now all is right with the world.

Susan Morrow is Treasurer of Big Apple Ferrets Inc. (a not-for-profit organization) in New York City, USA. When she is not being controlled by aliens (or ferrets), she does all sorts of stuff for ferrets of her own free will, goes to graduate school at night, and works as an accountant by day.

Neal Segal is President of Big Apple Ferrets Inc. When he's not traveling the world or playing with his ferrets, he studies architecture at Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, NY.

NOTE: Some of you might be concerned that this could happen to you. Be reassured, however, that the aliens appear to control only those who are involved somehow with accountancy (as evidenced by the fact that both George and Sue are accountants). Perhaps accountants are not quite as serious-minded as some of us would like to believe. If they were, would it not seem odd for a creature as silly as a ferret to want to share its thoughts with one? Besides, being controlled by ferrets does not seem to be a terrible thing. Many of us are under the Mustelid Spell. — Ed.

Basil on Catherine's lap

The message switched off and I heard the caller speak. I also heard the theme to the Twilight Zone — doodee, doodee, doodee, doodee, doodee, doodee. In all horror movies there is at least one scene where you can see that the person on screen is going to do something that no intelligent individual would ever contemplate: go into a dark cellar or up into a dusty attic, etc. Everyone knows that something terrible will happen, except the idiot on celluloid. You catch yourself thinking "Don't go in there!/ Don't open that chest!/ Don't pull that lever!" or whatever. There must have been people watching me, thinking "Don't pick up the phone, something terrible will happen if you do!" In the tradition of the best horror movies, I paid no heed. I was seduced by the honeyed voice coming over the wires saying "Hi George, this is Sue Morrow of Big Apple Ferrets. Mary Shefferman of *Modern Ferret* has given me your number..." I picked up the phone. It was done. The body had been snatched, and the mind was now under alien control.

Susan then went on to tell me that she was arranging a trip to the UK later in the year and wanted to take some ferrets back to the USA — would I be able to help?

"Yes of course," said I, thinking it would be no problem. Nothing could have been further from the truth! Next minute she's yakking away: "Must be good conformation ... Have you got any cinnamons? ... Pedigrees for ten generations ... black sables ... champagne and chocolates." (Hold it, I thought, I know these American women are very forward, but I don't normally give chocolates and champagne until the second date!) Phew! I then find out she's talking about ferrets. "We'll be using our own distemper vaccine ... need rabies injections ... vet checks ... yak, yak, yak." I thought that I could talk given the opportunity, but boy this one had me beat. I couldn't get a word in edgeways! "Don't worry if you can't remember all this," says Susan after what seemed like a lifetime (well I suppose that two hours is a lifetime for a mayfly, or is it two lifetimes?), "I'll be sending you a package with all this information in it in the next few days."

"Well I'll certainly look forward to that," I thought, then began to worry about who was going to pay for the postman's hernia operation.

The package arrived, as promised, and contained all sorts of very useful information, as well as a summary of what Susan had told me on the telephone. Just as well, really, as I couldn't remember half of it.

So, now it starts. Phoning vets, etc., finally I end up speaking to a senior veterinary officer at the Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food. Have any of you tried to talk to a government department and gotten a reply from the first person you speak to? I think not. I'm sure that it's no different in the USA. These people can drive you crazy passing you from extension to extension. What have these alien monsters done to me? I thought a couple of phone calls — but no! It's like following a piece of string through a labyrinth (Theseus, eat your heart out):-Anyway, finally I got to the horse's mouth.

Bringing their own distemper vaccine, can they use it? "No!" What about rabies vaccine being brought in? "No way! You are joking!!!" he says in a tone that suggested imprisonment in the Tower would be the reward for trying this. "Rabies vaccine can only be issued from the Ministry on receipt of the proper application form (I think to myself, bet that is a really quick and easy procedure!) stating the date the vaccine is to be administered and the booked exit time from the UK of the vaccinated animal, which must be within 24 hours of the vaccination being administered!" Whoops!!! or words to that effect. Back to the drawing board. Anyway, after all that he turned out to be very helpful, and told me exactly what had to be done to satisfy the UK and US authorities — has to be a first time for everything, doesn't there?

Faxes and e-mail back to the alien controller's headquarters. "Earthling Ferret Tracer reporting back for further instructions, O, great one." Two-way traffic of trans-Atlantic telephone calls, faxes, and e-mail follow in profusion. Everything was eventually sorted out, and we all knew what we were doing. Hooray!!

The President of Big Apple Ferrets in New York City, Neal Segal, who was working in London at the time, came over to my house one Sunday, and we had a really good time. I took him over to Peter Knight's house. Peter is the Chairman of the Essex Ferret Welfare Society, and he houses about 40 or more of our rescues. Neal is completely overwhelmed by ferrets.

Two Weeks to Ferret Day — The call comes: "Help!" (What else?) "Temperature at JFK is too high during the hours 9.00 to 5.00 — ferrets can't land!!" O.K. "Can you sort out some holding quarters for 22

Hector, Holly, and Heather

I don't think my body is my own anymore, it's under remote control from 4,000 miles away.

ferrets until temperature drops?"

See what I mean now about body snatchers? I don't think my body is my own anymore, it's under remote control from 4,000 miles away. Not to mention my brain, or what's left of it!

Sort quarters out with someone living near Heathrow, send off instructions to Susan on how to get to my house from Heathrow airport. Susan tells me that Sally Heber (President of the American Ferret Association) is coming with her husband, Rich, so I send instructions to get to my house from Gatwick airport.

Ferret Day Minus 1 — Receive impassioned call from Neal: "Susan has lost the instructions on how to get to your house, can you fax them to her again?" And there was I, thinking that these aliens were efficient. Mustn't disobey the master, so fax instructions again, hope they get there before she leaves or there will be hell to pay.

Ferret Day Arrives — First to arrive are Sally and Rich. I recognise Sally from her photograph in *Modern Ferret*. Sally comes in bearing lots of ferret stuff. We all sit out in the garden and have a cold drink. Sally has a wonderful time examining my ferrets and looking at the three that were selected to be taken back. Everything is recorded on video. One hour later, Neal arrives with my controller. To my surprise, she looks quite human and normal! But wait, she ignores me completely and starts looking at the ferret prints on the wall. "These are really great, how can I get some?" she asks. Then, "Oh, Hi George."

We all go out into the garden. The ferrets come out again, more videotaping. The whole patio by now is covered with ferret stuff, books, pamphlets, hats, stickers, etc. Now comes the eerie part — for a period of eight weeks prior to that day, we had been suffering temperatures in the 90's and there had been no rain at all. Suddenly a huge black cloud comes over, and it pours with rain! Panic ensues. It's really pouring down, we are all rushing around like lunatics, picking up books, papers, various ferret stuff that's strewn around and running into the house with our arms full, and generally getting in one another's way. We all sit inside while it's raining. Sally and Susan are yakking away, "Look at that picture, isn't it great, where did he get it from? This is terrific etc. etc." I think to myself, "Now I'll impress them," so I take up a nonchalant stance just by the fire, perfectly inclining my body so that by looking at me, the eye is led across to where my arm rests near a photograph of Princess Alexandra and me. This photograph was taken at a function held by one of my clients. To be honest, I look particularly terrific, smart, suave — the absolute epitome of an English gent. They take no notice. I say, "Hey, can't you see this picture, look at me I'm talking to Princess Alexandra, haven't you noticed?"

"No," they said in unison, "we wouldn't have noticed that! There aren't any FERRETS in it!" I gave up.

Later in the afternoon we all go in convoy to Peter and Shirley Knight's home. Peter keeps a number of the Society rescues there, as I said before, and does a great deal of rehoming from his house. Everybody goes out into the back garden. The ferrets come out again — all 60 of them. Sally and Susan are picking up ferrets and kits; Neal is working the video camera. More chatting about ferrets. Sally sets about looking in earnest for all the colour types that are wanted. A great deal of discussion is going on in the meantime about the various merits of this ferret and that ferret. Finally the choice was made and we left with another five ferret kits. We all got back to my house around 9 pm and we intended to go for a quick drink in the pub across the road. Unfortunately this was not to be, as everyone was so tired when we got back that they decided to get on with the next leg of the journey. This was a great pity, as Sally and Rich left on the following Friday and were unable to get back to see me before they left. Susan and Neal came around the Friday that Sally and Rich left, and we went for that drink. Needless to say, all the talk was about ferrets — and it went on until 1 am.

The next day Susan and Neal paid a visit to a show that we were attending at Epping and we enjoyed a very pleasant afternoon. They picked another ferret — these alien beings must have their pound of flesh you know — and off they went. Susan was flying back to the USA the following day, and Neal was taking care of the entire consignment of ferrets until they were transported on the following Tuesday — poor chap! The last I saw of Susan, the alien controller, was as I passed them going home on the motorway. Neal was driving, I drew level and waved across. Neal waved, Susan waved. And the very last thing I saw was a ferret, being held up by Susan, waving frantically as I drove by. I still haven't made up my mind whether or not it was desperately trying to attract my attention to let me know that it was in need of help, as it was now in the company of the Body Snatchers.

Personally, I blame the whole thing on *Modern Ferret!*

I know these American women are very forward, but I don't normally give chocolates and champagne until the second date!

The above article was written with tongue in cheek, as I hope all readers will realise. In fact, Susan and I became very firm friends during this episode, and I know that she will see the humour that was intended. I would not have dared to have said the things above otherwise — she would have killed me if she ever saw me again! The nicest thing that occurred this summer, as far as I am concerned, is that I have made some really good friends across the Atlantic, and I can now say that I really do have an "American Connection."

George Parker is Treasurer of the Essex Ferret Welfare Society in Essex, UK. The Society rescues and places homeless ferrets. When he's not rehoming ferrets (or hunting with his own ferrets), he's a self-employed accountant. He's also a very nice chap who's willing to pose for bizarre photos for Modern Ferret. *Perhaps this is proof-positive that ferret people are a little nutty throughout the world (maybe even the universe).*

ANIMAL CONNECTION

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Ralph's Reviews IN COLOR

featuring: RALPH THE INSPECTOR

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The Ferret Snuggly is a handy ferret carrying pouch humans can wear! Two sturdy, adjustable straps can be worn over the shoulders and crossed in back or with one around the neck and the other around the waist. The draw-string closure has a sliding push-button fastener that "locks" into place to keep the pouch open (or closed) as much as you want, without your ferret being able to open it further. Your ferret stays cozy and comfortable no matter where you go. A warm and stylish addition to any accessory wardrobe — and the ferrets like it, too. Available in assorted colors/patterns.

Ralph's Review: This is comfy to sleep in. I like to sleep. You can also look around from inside the bag if you're not sleeping. It's warm and soft. And it keeps your human close to you, which is particularly convenient if you get scared or if you need a treat really fast.

***The Four Ferreteers* graphic novel**
Created by H. & W. Harth
Paw Print Productions
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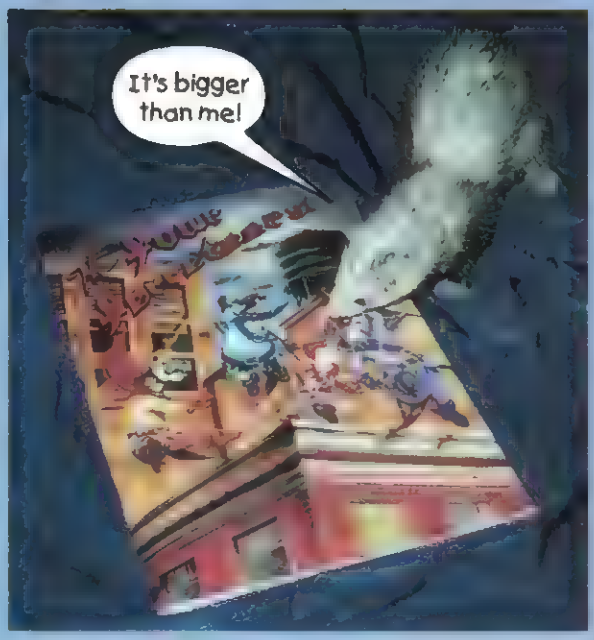
Phone: (908) 832-0991

This 11" x 17" graphic novel about four magical ferret heroes is a fun adventure story for ferret lovers of all ages. Andre (Andy), Rene (Reny), Claude (Clod), and Suzette (Suzy) are the Four Ferreteers — the fearless, fighting ferret foursome ... from France! Follow them as they fight evil-doers and save the day. The book is charmingly illustrated and full of color. Dedicated to the Harths' ferrets, past & present, the story of the Four Ferreteers offers readers a positive and imaginative view of our favorite fuzzies. The Four Ferreteers are ferret heroes whose time has come. Not available in stores.

Ralph's Review: This book thing is big and slick. When you pile papers on top of it, they slide off really well. All books should be slippery and big. And they should be left on the floor so ferrets can slide on them. My specialty is the belly slide. A note to ferrets who like to chew things: this is too pretty to eat.



You saw it here in Modern Ferret!

Ralph's Health Warning

Hi fellow ferrets! I just want to share with you a scary thing that happened to me (don't worry though — everything turns out OK!). A few weeks ago my dad was petting me when he noticed that I had an unusual bump on my head. It looked like a little wart. At first mommy and daddy thought I got bitten by that little brat Knuks and it got infected. The next day it didn't look any better. My parents were concerned and immediately rushed me off for a visit to the veterinarian. The vet said that it looked like a tumor and suggested a surgery (yikes!) be scheduled to remove it.

My mommy and daddy did some research and came up with this:

> Skin tumors are common in ferrets. While they are not usually malignant, they can be irritating and can spread. The best thing to do is to have a veterinarian look at the bump, remove it, and have it analyzed (called a biopsy).

Well, mommy and daddy fasted me for about 6 hours before the surgery (remember, we ferrets have a quick digestive tract and 3 to 4 hours is enough to clear us out). Then they brought me to the vet and put me under anesthesia (some stuff called Isoflurane). A little while later I was ready to go back home — with a shaved head! Two weeks later I went back to have the stitches taken out and the area examined. I was fine, although a little embarassed to go out in public with a funny haircut.

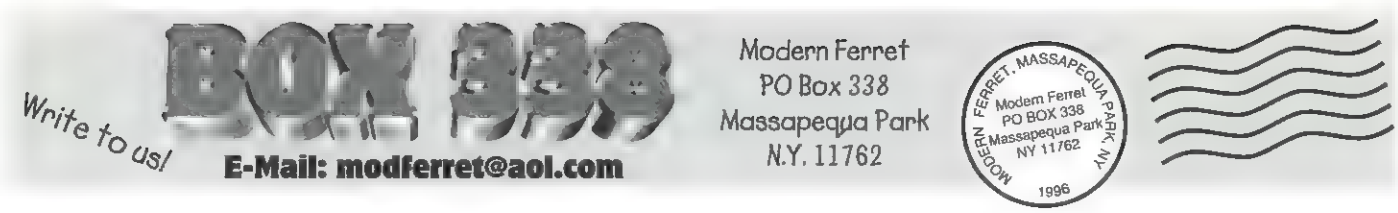
Well, my hair has all grown back now and (as you can see from the opposite page) I'm back to my usual glamorous self. I told you everything turns out OK. So make sure your mommy and daddy check you every now and then to make sure you don't have any strange bumps of your own!

- Ralph

P.S. Thank you to everybody who sent get-well wishes. They worked!

Big thanks to Kelly Rebhahn for this Get-Well card!

All better!



Letters to *Modern Ferret*

Box 338 Logo designed by Jennifer Makower

Dear Modern Ferret,

All I can say is, "Wow!" While on a trip, I stopped in a bookstore to browse... looking at magazines, I saw "RET" poking out from behind a magazine on fishing. Hardly daring to hope, I pulled it out ... and the word "ferret" blazed forth in full-color glory! Imagine a grown woman doing a dance of joy in a bookstore, drawing odd looks from the other browsers... that's me. I could hardly wait to show this newfound treasure to the kids. not only will your magazine be great for those who already know the joys of ferrethood, it will help us in our struggle to "legalize" our crazy critters. The quality publication makes ferrets look like real pets, not just a fetish for freaks. See, I used to be one of the masses who believed all of the false media hype on ferrets. I had been badly bitten by an unhandled, bored, mistreated "mall store ferret" and was more than convinced that ferrets were horrible wild monsters kept only by weirdoes. It was only a little over a year ago that a caring, intelligent person with a very sweet ferret took the time to show me that ferrets can be fun. I now share my life with six furry slinkies and wonder how I could have ever hated these adorable animals! In return, I do my best to spread the word on the joys of ferret ownership. Your magazine should help us all in that endeavor.

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***

And once again, thank you for such a fine magazine.

Sincerely, Dawn Vaughan
Statesboro, GA

TO RALPH ...

Dear Modern Ferret,

Please give us more Ralph! Whatta hunka hob! Put his hot stripey face on every cover. And a centerfold, too! Thank you very much!
Love,
Kaily and Aran Vaughan

OR NOT TO RALPH ...

Dear Modern Ferret,

Please do not put any more of that Ralph guy in your magazine. We are tired of all the gooking and swooning from those stupid girls. What's so hot about a stripe, anyway?
Thanks.
Garion, Garak, Sylven, and Dillan Vaughan

Ralph's Agent replies:

If it were up to me, I'd have Ralph's face plastered all over the globe, but Ralph is a retiring sort of ferret who chooses to follow the J.D. Salinger/Howard Hughes philosophy in his dealings with the public.

Dear Mary and Eric,

Today I received my first issue (#4) of Modern Ferret, and I'm forcing myself to stop laughing with delight just long enough to dash off a letter of thanks to you.

It's full of priceless health, diet, and training information. And the presentation of Ferret Entrepreneurs made me grab for my checkbook in a gotta-have-all-this-great-ferret-stuff frenzy. And the photos sent me into a sever attack of the warm and fuzzies.

And it's wacky as heck! That's the best part.

By the way, we here in the Arnold household would really appreciate an article on ferrets and cats. As in, do they ever learn to peacefully co-exist? Or are we forever doomed to our wild little party-animal ferrets picking unmercifully on our gracefully-aging stuffy dignified cats? Suggestions, anyone?

Thanks again.

Linda Arnold (me)
Alvin, Sally, Dweezil, and Sparky Arnold (ferrets)
Joshua, Misty, Raven, and Flossie Arnold (felines)
Oh yeah, Joe Arnold (my hubby)
Woodbine, MD

I love your fun and funny attitude in your magazine — like a ferret's. And the pictures are great!

Jana Bardach
Carmel, IN

Dook, Dook !!

Thanks for the "Robbin Hood" story. It was very educational. You see we know how to 'surf the net' but didn't know how to use the phone. And the tip about the little plastic cards was terrific. Since the humans are gone for awhile we went through all the catalogs and placed orders for everything.(Do you think they will be angry with us?)

Oops hear the car got to go
Feets, Trouble, Attila

Oh yea the humans are Charlie & Bev Fox

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MODERN NUTRITION FOR MODERN FERRETS

By Martin J. Glinsky, PhD

Ferret owners represent a unique breed among animal enthusiasts. While most pet owners certainly have a keen interest in their pet's well-being, the ferret owner takes his interest to an uncommon height. However, it is important to separate fact from fiction and reliable information from hearsay. This article is intended to help not only ferret owners, but anyone interested in sound nutrition information, unobscured by commercial hype or self-professed nutritional gurus.

General Nutritional Information

Companion animal nutrition varies from human nutrition in one very basic, yet very important way. While human nutritional intake customarily comes from a number of different food sources segregated into five food groups (courtesy of the USDA), domesticated animals are usually fed a solitary source of nutrition in a single form, i.e., Ferret Food. Our companion animals do not have the opportunity or need to forage for their nutrition in the environment as "hunters and/or gatherers." Their nutrient requirements are supplied in a single package by the pet owner. Their food must contain all the nutrients known to be required by them, with due consideration to age, activity level, environment, health, and so on.

Nutrition Concept #1: Nutritionally speaking, animals need specific nutrients for good health; not necessarily special ingredients or raw materials.

These nutrients must be available to the animal physiologically (digestible and readily available) and they must be in a palatable form so they will be readily eaten. In addition, they must be in a cost range that is acceptable to the buyer. For instance, while skinless-boneless chicken breasts are an excellent protein source, the cost of this material makes it an unrealistic choice for use in pet diets. Chicken meal, a by-product of chicken processing, supplies essentially identical protein nutrition at a greatly reduced cost. While by-products are aesthetically unappealing for human diets, they do contain similar nutrient profiles. Thus, it is important to understand that ingredients are the packaging for nutrients. Just as some packaging is superfluous environmentally and structurally, pet food ingredients often contain substances that are not important in respect to nutritional requirements, and are present as part of the "packaging." One example of this, which will be discussed later, is the concept of protein as the supplier of amino acids.

All living organisms have specific nutrient requirements that must be supplied for optimum performance. In respect to the ferret, these include water, energy, amino acids, fatty acids, minerals, and vitamins. Unfortunately, while we do not know many of the "minimum" nutrient requirements of ferrets, we do know through experience, extrapolation, and common sense what we feel are the "optimum" nutrient requirements. For example, although we do not know what the minimum requirement for Vitamin A is, we do know that 500 IU per day satisfies all of the ferret's requirements. Could the ferret "get by" with 250 IU? Maybe, but it is not our intention to supply minimum nutrient levels. We are interested in optimum levels which will meet all of the ferret's requirements, regardless of age, weight, health status, activity level, stress or environmental changes. The economic savings are not worth the possibility that even one ferret in 100,000 may need more than 250 IU per day. Obviously, in an economic-dependent situation such as poultry production, where literally millions of birds are fed each day, every penny is important. Companion animal nutrition is not bound by the same economic restrictions.

Nutrition Concept #2: Animals, in general, eat to meet their energy needs.

Studies have shown that when an animal is offered a reasonably palatable diet, physiologically, the animal's regulatory mechanisms take over when the energy requirements are met. This sends a message to the animal to stop eating. While many factors can cause this mechanism to perform imperfectly (such as highly palatable food), under normal conditions this process is approximately 80% effective. Thus, it is crucial to the nutritional well-being of your ferret that the nutrients in his diet be balanced in regard to the energy density.

As an example, let's say our ferret's caloric (energy) requirement is 200 kcal per day, which is equivalent to approximately 50 grams (g) of a high-quality ferret diet containing 35% protein and 15% fat. Let us also assume that his Vitamin A requirement is 500 IU per day. If we formulate the diet to have 10 IU/g of Vitamin A, at 50 g intake we have met his Vitamin A requirement (50 g X 10 IU/g = 500 IU Vitamin A). Now, let's consider an uninformed ferret owner (one who doesn't read *Modern*

Animals, in general, eat to meet their energy needs. Studies have shown that when an animal is offered a reasonably palatable diet, physiologically, the animal's regulatory mechanisms take over when the energy requirements are met. This sends a message to the animal to stop eating.

Ferret) who cannot resist those cute little eyes staring at her when she is eating that marshmallow sundae. Her fuzzy receives a whole tablespoon equivalent to approximately 50 kcal. Now, instead of needing 50 g of ferret food to meet his energy requirement, he needs only approximately 40 g. His Vitamin A intake therefore drops to 400 IU (40 g diet X 10 IU/g = 400 IU), which falls below the ferret's requirement (now you know why mom made you "starve" before dinner so you wouldn't "spoil" your appetite!).

While this example may not be completely accurate, it does help to illustrate the concept of energy density. This is the reason that when someone makes the comment that a particular food is too high (or too low) in protein, they are not making a complete statement. Without considering the fat or energy level, we have no way of knowing whether the diet is too high, too low or perfect in protein content. The overall protein intake on a 36% protein diet could actually be lower than the protein intake on a 28% protein diet. The actual protein intake (% protein X g food consumed) is dependent on the energy density of the given formula, which will dictate the amount of food eaten! Thus, it is imperative to consider the energy level of a diet when formulating for nutritional adequacy.

One additional example that demonstrates this concept could be called "When can a bag of Doritos™ be good for you?" In this case, we look at an athlete's nutritional requirements during a period of training. While some requirements, such as protein, change modestly, the increase in energy needs (and some minerals lost through perspiration) is substantial and is commensurate with the activity level. Assuming that the athlete's individual nutrient requirements are met by a balanced diet during the day, her nutrient deficiencies mentioned above can be corrected by a relatively high-fat and high-salt "snack." While this may sound contrary to the typical advice we receive from health professionals, the concept is absolutely sound on a nutritional basis. Animals have specific nutrient requirements that can be met by a diverse variety of foods. The concept of some foods being good for you and some foods bad is misleading if you don't have a clear understanding of the individual's specific nutrient requirements.

Protein and Amino Acids

Animals do not have a requirement for protein! What living organisms need, including ferrets, are amino acids, which are the building blocks of protein. The ferret requires approximately 21 amino acids. These are normally separated into two groups:

1) Dispensable — those that can be synthesized by the animal, and

2) Indispensable — those that require supply from an extraneous source, usually in the form of food.

The indispensable amino acids are supplied by the protein in the food that is ingested. Obviously, some ingredients are higher in protein, and therefore higher in amino acids, than others. Rice, for instance, contains approximately 8% protein, while chicken meal contains about 62%. However, it is not only the quantity of protein that is important but also the quality. Not all proteins are created equal! In the case of ferret diets, the quantity of indispensable amino acids varies from ingredient to ingredient. Protein quality is a measurement of how closely the amino acid profile of the protein coincides with the actual amino acid requirements of the animal. For carnivores like the ferret, in general, animal proteins contain a better compliment of indispensable amino acids than plant- or grain-derived proteins. As an extreme example, feather meal contains about 80% protein. However, the quality of the protein is very poor, which means it contains very low levels of the amino acids required in the largest amounts. An animal could not physically consume enough feather meal to meet some of his amino acid requirements, such as for lysine.

Since no one protein is perfect, however, in regards to quality, nutritionists normally use a variety of proteins when formulating a diet. The use of two or more protein sources (such as chicken meal and dried eggs) balances the amino acid composition of the finished product. Theoretically, a food with a perfectly balanced amino acid profile may show only 15%-20% protein when analyzed. However, in actuality, more protein has to be used in formulations to ensure that sufficient levels of the most limited amino acids are available to the animal. Thus, in commercially available diets, the protein content is somewhat elevated in order to compensate for protein quality that is good, but not perfect.

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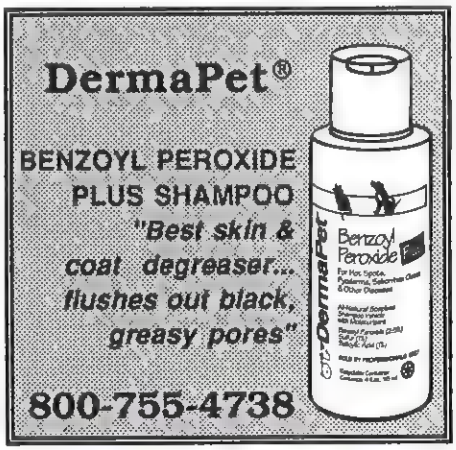
The Importance of Fat in Ferret Diets and The Relationship Between Fat and Energy

Fat has more than two times the energy value of carbohydrates or protein. On the basis of metabolizable energy (ME) this equates to approximately 8.5 kcal/g for fat and 3.5 kcal/g for carbohydrates or protein. ME is determined by subtracting the energy content of the waste products of digestion from the gross energy of the diet. The formula which describes this is:

Metabolizable Energy (ME) = Gross Energy (GE) of the diet (g food intake X kcal/g of food) – Fecal Energy (g feces X kcal/g of fecal material) – Urinary Energy (g urine X kcal/g of urine)

ME is considered the real energy available to the animal for all life processes. The high amount of fat in high-quality ferret diets (15% and higher) means that the ferret will not have to eat as much food to meet his energy requirements compared with low-fat diets. However, as shown previously, the diet must be balanced in relation to energy density to ensure optimum nutritional intake for all nutrients.



Besides energy, fat supplies essential fatty acids such as linoleic, linolenic, and arachidonic acids. Linoleic acid, found in high levels in unsaturated fats such as chicken fat and corn oil, is very important in maintaining skin and coat condition. Fatty acid supplements are available to ensure adequate intake of these nutrients.

Is More "Better" When It Comes To Vitamins and Minerals?

The answer to this is a resounding NO! The ferret, as well as other animals, has defined requirements for vitamins and minerals that normally do not change significantly under most conditions. Severe vitamin overdoses, while rare, are potentially very dangerous. In addition, correct mineral levels and balance is crucial for optimum mineral nutrition. Zinc and copper, for instance, interact with each other. Too high a level of one can cause an absorption problem with the other. Another example is the ratio of calcium to phosphorus which should be approximately 1.1 to 1.5. Too small a ratio can result in impaired bone formation. These are just two examples of interactions that must be considered before capriciously supplementing a diet. This is why pet food manufacturers strive for ***complete*** and ***balanced*** formulations, and why great care must be taken when supplementing your ferret's food. Again, the key word when seeking optimum nutrition is BALANCE.

Supplements, when used according to the manufacturer's directions, are advantageous and efficacious. A vitamin supplement formulated especially for ferrets can be extremely important during stress and/or convalescence. Stress can be the result of a variety of situations. These include change of environment, visit to the veterinarian, illness (certainly intestinal upset), etc. A good skin and coat supplement can also help bring out the luster in a ferret's coat.

Nutritional Testing Under Live Conditions

Ferret owners often ask how animal nutritionists determine the best formulation for a ferret diet. My response is "we let the ferrets tell us!" There is no substitute for a controlled feeding program on a large number of ferrets in order to test for palatability and nutritional adequacy. Extrapolating too much data from other species (such as cats) can be at best inaccurate and at worst harmful to the ferret.

Summary

This discussion was intended to focus on specific topics concerning ferret nutrition and address them on a factual level, unencumbered by marketing propaganda. We attempted to present concepts that have not been published previously in ferret-oriented literature. If we have shattered some misconceptions about pet nutrition, that was our intention.

Martin Glinsky, Ph.D., is an animal nutritionist who has developed pet food diets for various animals, including ferrets. He received his B.S. in Biological Sciences from Cornell University in 1972 and his Ph.D. in Animal Nutrition from the University of Illinois in 1976. He is currently Vice President of Sales & Marketing at Eight in One Pet Products, Inc., in Hauppauge, NY.

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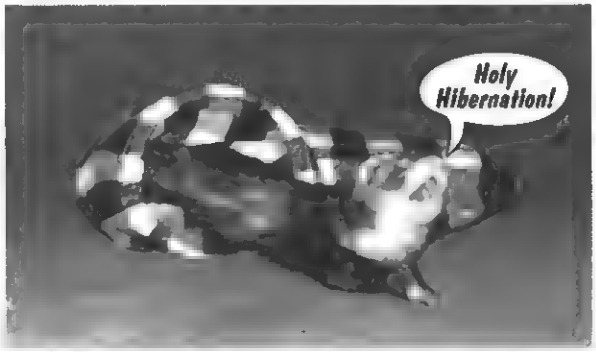

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DOCTOR TO DOCTOR™

Hemolytic Anemia in Ferrets

By Tom Kawasaki, DVM, and Megan Ashburn

During 15 years of practice, I have observed several cases of suspected hemolytic anemia in ferrets. In this report, I present typical symptoms I have observed, diagnostic techniques, and my treatment regimen for this disease.

Red blood cell (RBC) destruction and, in most cases, a strong regenerative response characterizes hemolytic anemia in domestic animals. In dogs, the species in which most research has been conducted in the area of hemolytic anemia, hemolytic anemia arises most commonly as a result of RBC parasitism or direct drug toxicity on the RBC itself, resulting in Heinz body formation (denaturation of hemoglobin, the oxygen-carrying compound of the RBC). This may be seen following the administration of common drugs such as methylene blue, DL-methionine, or by ingestion of some natural substances, such as onions. Recently, vaccinations (given less than 21 days previously) and insecticides have been reported to precipitate hemolytic events in dogs. However, the causes of hemolytic anemia in the ferret remain a mystery.

Ferrets with suspected hemolytic anemia exhibit signs of weakness and depression. Pallor of the mucous membranes can be used as a crude diagnostic index. In severe cases of anemia, a heart murmur may also be present. Other signs may include icterus (jaundice) and splenomegaly.

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In the dog, the diagnosis of hemolytic anemia depends primarily on laboratory data, including cell morphology, red cell indices, a positive Coomb's test, and a positive antinuclear antibody test. Even without positive tests, a low packed cell volume (PCV), a moderate to marked reticulocyte (immature RBC) count, and moderate anisocytosis (differences in RBC size), polychromasia (differences in RBC staining color), macrocytosis (the presence of large cells), spherocytosis (the presence of cells without central pallor), and autoagglutination all can indicate hemolytic anemia. In the dog, it may take up to 4–7 days for reticulocyte production to be evident once a hemolytic event occurs.

Additional information can be obtained from the blood smear. Heinz bodies (accumulation of denatured fragments of hemoglobin) or the presence of hemoparasites can be identified in the practice setting. Spherocytes may be also be identified in the blood smear. An antinuclear antibody test may be used in ferrets but may need to be run several times, as false negative tests are common. Coomb's tests are largely of little use in ferrets due to the requirement for species-specific serum. Splenomegaly must be evaluated with caution, as it is a nonspecific sign in this species and must be evaluated only in conjunction with other clinical signs.

Prednisone, dosed at 1–4 mg/lb SID, is the most conventional form of treatment for hemolytic anemia in the ferret. In severe cases, or cases refractory to prednisone, dexamethasone may be used at 0.3–1.0 mg/lb. The use of transfusions in ferrets for the treatment of hemolytic anemia is controversial. If an active ferret has a very low PCV, I believe that a wait-and-see approach is appropriate, as the use of prednisone alone may halt ongoing hemolysis. Many hematologists maintain that since transfusions introduce foreign RBC antigens into the bloodstream, they may accelerate the immune-mediated destruction process. Other hematologists, however, advocate transfusions when the PCV drops to 20% or lower. It is important to remember to transfuse the ferret based on its activity level and not the value of the hematocrit. Remember that ferrets do not have established blood groups, so that blood need not be cross-matched or tested for agglutination when a transfusion is contemplated.

While removal of the spleen (the major site of RBC destruction) seems logical, this point is also controversial. I recommend removing the spleen only when traditional treatment has failed. An anemic animal presents an anesthetic risk, so a transfusion is recommended prior to and during surgery. Since up to 30% of dogs die of thromboembolic diseases with immune-mediated anemia, administration of heparin is suggested at 200 IU/lb for the ferret in the treatment regimen.

IMMUNE-MEDIATED ANEMIA: CASES

Case 1. A 5-year-old female ferret presented with signs of depression and anorexia. Physical exam revealed marked splenomegaly. A CBC revealed numerous circulating nucleated RBCs, moderate polychromasia, and anisocytosis. A splenic aspirate revealed extramedullary hematopoiesis. One month later, she returned for splenectomy. Nucleated red cells were still present on a blood smear. Her reticulocyte count was markedly elevated at 32%. Eight cc of blood was transfused, the splenectomy was performed, and the ferret was discharged on 2 mg prednisone PO daily. Eleven days later, a final CBC revealed improvement, with an increased PCV, RBC count, and platelet count. Six months later, the patient was still doing well.

Case 2. A 3-year-old female ferret presented one week postpartum with depression, anorexia, and a vaginal discharge. Her temperature was normal at 102ºF. Moderate anisocytosis, polychromasia, and one nucleated RBC were seen on a peripheral blood smear. Three days

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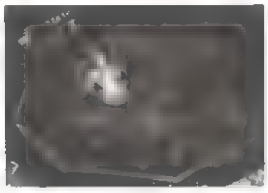

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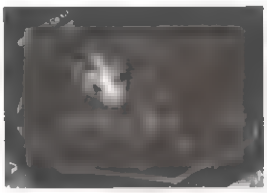

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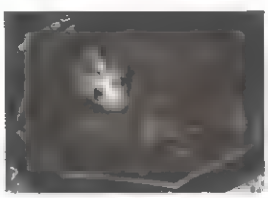

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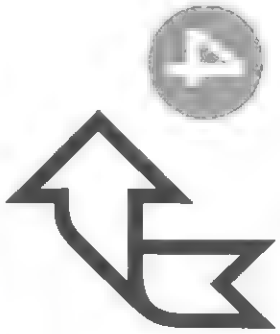

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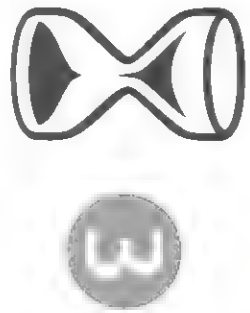

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later, the ferret presented with icterus. The PCV had dropped from 36% to 17% without evidence of hemorrhage. The next day, serum chemistry indicated renal failure.

Intravenous fluids were administered; 12 cc of blood was transfused, and 2 mg/lb prednisone was prescribed. A poor prognosis was given and the patient died within two hours of treatment.

Case 3. A 3-year-old male ferret presented with ulcers on the nose, oral cavity and perianal skin, and paraparesis. CBC revealed mild anemia (40%); spherocytes and moderate anisocytosis were seen on the blood smear. The ferret was placed on prednisone at 2 mg/lb and amoxicillin at 10 mg/lb. A second CBC was run 12 days later and showed a drop in PCV to 25%. Prednisone and amoxicillin were continued at the same dosage. Over the next 5 months, the hematocrit climbed steadily to a level of 67%. The animal remains in good health.

DISCUSSION

While a definitive diagnosis of hemolytic anemia was not proven in these cases, the presence of a rapidly progressing anemia, a strong regenerative bone marrow response, and in most cases, a clinical improvement using prednisone are consistent with the previously unreported phenomenon of hemolytic anemia in the ferret.

In summary, the case reports indicate several important points in the diagnosis and treatment of hemolytic anemia in the ferret. All cases had precipitous drops in PCV without evidence of overt blood loss. Polychromasia and anisocytosis, in my experience, are commonly seen in cases of hemolytic anemia. Reticulocytosis is also a common finding.

High-dose prednisone at doses up to 2mg/lb may be of benefit in the treatment of hemolytic anemia. Transfusions are often ineffective in treatment of this disease; in Case 2 and several others that I have treated, transfusions had no effect on the clinical course of the disease, and the animals ultimately died.

Tom Kawasaki, DVM, and Megan Ashburn, practice at Old Bridge Veterinary Hospital, 3604 Old Bridge Road, Woodbridge, VA 22192.

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A Ferret Tale

Story by Rick Nagel

Illustrations by Linda P. Ozelis

Once upon a sign in their favorite mall two young ferrets climbed, darting and weaving, on and off, above and below, nipping each other's tails and chattering endlessly. Little did the young kits know then that many years hence their future happiness together and their very lives would be threatened by a force of unparalleled wickedness.

A menacing darkness crept over the unwary kingdom like a fog, and an evil wind blew in an endless horde of ash-gray clouds blocking out the sun and blanketing Putoria in their ugliness. Only SoWhite the ferret princess had the power to disperse the clouds and restore brightness to the kingdom. Only SoWhite had the pureness of heart and the knowledge of magic strong enough to defeat the evil of Whippel, the wicked weasel wizard. Only SoWhite...

Several miles from SoWhite's castle lay Whippel's malevolent lair, a mammoth edifice of drab gray stone reaching high into the now disfigured sky. In the shadows of its tallest turret was a small room with a bed of rags and a table. Nestled in that bed was the princess who had unwittingly fallen under the wizard's spell and now lay in an eternal trance unless awakened by a friendly sniff. SoWhite, unable to resist Whippel's lure, had eaten a tainted raisin given to her by one of the wizard's cronies while she and several friends cruised the vast, tree-lined ferrets' mall. Now curled tightly within the rags the albino princess waits while Whippel tightens his suffocating rule over the land unless...

As chance would have it, Linna — a young, swift swallow and SoWhite's lady in waiting — saw Whippel's evil scheme unfold and from a safe distance watched him carry SoWhite to his lair and deposit her in that dreadful turret. Then as swiftly as her strong wings would carry her, she sped across the sky like a bullet, protected by the darkness that cloaked the kingdom. Flying nonstop for ten hours in the forbidding clouds she could see distant rays of welcoming light, and finally the sky exploded in brightness and warmth. She had reached the neighboring kingdom Litternia and the home of SoWhite's fiancé, Prince Sharmin, an exquisitely handsome hob.

SoWhite takes the tainted raisin.

Exhausted, famished, and breathless she collapsed on the window sill of the near-sighted Prince who recognized her immediately after a few investigative sniffs. The Prince called for his attendants and they attended dutifully to Linna and revived her shortly. She quickly told Prince Sharmin her sad story while his eyes flashed angrily through his dark, sculpted mask.

"I should have been at the ferrets' mall with SoWhite," he moaned.

Linna implored him to go to his beloved SoWhite and release her from the trance.

"But how can I do that?" asked the prince, his tail bushed in excitement.

"Hidden in her castle is a magic wheel," answered Linna. "It carries magic stronger than the weasel's cape and has been passed down through the royal family for generations."

"I've heard of such a wheel," replied the startled prince softly, "but I didn't know it really existed. Does SoWhite really have in her possession the mystical Ferret's Wheel?"

"Yes! Now we must get to SoWhite with the magic wheel before it's too late."

And so Linna and Prince Sharmin prepared for their journey to Putoria to find the powerful Ferret's Wheel and then rescue SoWhite. Because the journey was long, the prince brought along the bravest of his knights, Mark, a husky cinnamon ferret. The trio set out at dawn and traveled almost continuously for several days, stopping only to eat raisins and crunchy food and to catch a few winks. Along the way they were accosted by several of Whippel's weasel warriors who were dispatched with ease by Mark moving quite quickly for his size.

At last they reached SoWhite's castle in Putoria. All seemed still and unnaturally quiet; yet who knew what dangers lurked in the murky shadows surrounding SoWhite's home?

A room with no corners!?

"I know of a secret passage that leads to the chamber holding the Ferret's Wheel. It is a tunnel, very long, dark, and narrow. Its entrance is nearby."

"Show us the way," blurted the two ferrets in unison.

The two would-be rescuers darted up the tunnel quickly, undaunted by its narrow confines and unexpected twists and turns. Ahead the pinpoint of light gradually grew larger until they emerged into SoWhite's room, Linna anxiously awaiting them.

She led the two ferrets to a very old wooden box in which the golden Ferret's Wheel lay upon a red velvet cloth.

"Whoever wears the wheel," she whispered, "can withstand the weasel's magic and defeat him."

The prince slowly lifted the glimmering wheel and placed it around his neck. He felt its energy flow through his body, filling him with an uncanny sense of power and confidence.

"With this Wheel, we will rescue SoWhite and recover her kingdom. Let us be off."

The three would-be rescuers traveled many hours under cover of darkness to reach Whippel's castle, avoiding many traps on the way. Linna flew from turret to turret until she found the sleeping princess and signaled Sharmin and Mark. Despite the danger and difficulty, the two climbed the outside wall and painstakingly inched their way upwards, finally reaching a window in SoWhite's prison and tumbling in to the floor below.

Looking around the room while his eyes adjusted to the dim light the prince felt a sense of uneasiness that he couldn't put his paw on.

"There's something rotten in this den, Mark, but I just can't figure out what."

As they walked towards the princess and sniffed the walls of the room a horrible realization hit both ferrets simultaneously. The room was round! There were no corners!

"We've got to get out of here," said a flustered Mark, his heart beating faster as he coursed the circular room.

With a new sense of urgency, Prince Sharmin reached the princess and lovingly sniffed all about her. She began to stir and opened her eyes to gaze upon her rescuers. Her sleepy smile and newfound happiness quickly changed to panic when she realized she wasn't at the mall but in a ROUND room!

Just then Whippel and ten henchmen burst into the room surprising the unwary ferrets.

"Seize those ferrets of the mall," commanded the wicked weasel.

Before the evil pawns could obey their orders SoWhite took the Ferret's Wheel from Prince Sharmin and, backing up, spun it three times and uttered some magic words. Bolts of electricity shot out of the wheel and struck Whippel and his little army sending them flying into the next hamlet, never to be seen again.

Weeks later Sharmin and SoWhite were married, and happiness and light were restored to the kingdom. In gratitude to brave Linna for her part in rescuing SoWhite, Prince Sharmin decreed that henceforth Putoria would be known as Linnatown. And even to this very day, Linnatown is revered and beloved by ferrets everywhere.

SoWhite and Sharmin are wed.

Rick Nagel and his ferrets Coco, Frisky, Buddy, and Jazz can be found in Severna Park, MD. Rick is a middle school teacher who writes occasionally. The ferrets lend a few paws.

ANOTHER huge THANK YOU to Linda Ozelis for her wonderful illustrations. If you're in the Long Island area, she can be found doing pet caricatures some weekends at the Pet Supplies Plus in Westbury N.Y. Stop in and say, "Hi!"

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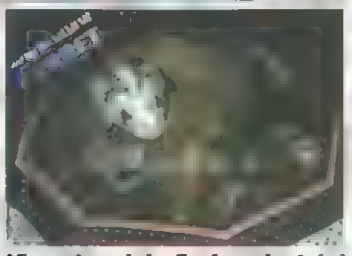

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Modern FERRET

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May 1996

Back by popular demand! Last year, the first calendar celebrating the domestic ferret arrived in the expectant hands of ferret lovers across the country. This year, the 1996 wall calendar again features 12 full color photographs starring these wonderful companion animals in an often humorous, sometimes tender, always beautifully photographed scene.

All animal lovers will delight in the antics of these engaging little critters, but if you are a ferret fan, or know someone who is, this calendar is a must for home, office, or both. Order it in time for Christmas!

Look for The Ferret Calendar™ in a pet store near you. Or send a check, or money order, for $12.95 plus $3.00 shipping and handling to The Ferret Calendar™. California residents must add $1.07 sales tax. Allow 2-4 weeks for delivery. Quantity discounts available to the trade.

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MINDING YOUR OWN BUSINESS™

Eric and Sabrina

Well, here we are at the end of another issue. Since this is coming out about a year after our first issue came out, let's take a look at how we're doing.

Modern Ferret is all about productivity. The two of us are working all the time to find more efficient ways to create a magazine. Right now we're two issues behind where we wanted to be (don't worry - subscriptions run for 6 issues even if we're a little slow putting them out), however, we've added lots of color and technology. We've done a lot more than we expected in terms of size and content.

We created *Modern Ferret* because we love our ferrets. We knew if we started a magazine with only ourselves (and our ferrets) as staff, we'd be able to keep it personal — from us to you. So far, I think we've improved with each issue, and I think we'll keep on improving as we go on. Let us know how we're doing.

I'd like to ask you to support *Modern Ferret* and the concepts behind it by subscribing if you don't already do so, and by letting as many ferret owners know about us as possible. Together we can create something that no other pet has — a magazine with the same energy level as a business of ferrets!

No barbecue tonight...

PRODUCTION NOTES:

This issue was composed in CorelDRAW! 5.0. Most scans done on a HP Scanjet IIcx. Hopefully we have the scanner better tuned now. New camera - Canon Rebel (look for better pictures in future issues). Key production folks - Sonic Graphic Systems. Big thanks to Jennifer Makower for the new Box 338 logo. Featured in this issue: **Corel Professional Photos - *Artist Textures*** and **Cameo Graphics *Wild Tiles!!*** Inspirational music: **Billy Joel, Boston, The Cars, Green Day, Elvis Costello,** and **Squeeze.** Inspirational TV: **Star Trek: The Next Generation, Star Trek: Deep Space Nine, The Bob Newhart Show, The Lucy Show, Forever Knight** (please help save this show), **Seinfeld, Friends, ER, The Munsters,** and of course, **The Dick Van Dyke Show.**

WILD TILES

Product Review:

Wild Tiles!! by Cameo Graphics
3400 Jackson Street
Oxnard, CA 93033 USA
(805)486-5591

Well, this issue you're seeing *Wild Tiles!!* nearly everywhere — from the front cover to right here! It's a CD filled with 2000 seamless tiling designs that are colorful and fun and really can liven up any DTP project (at a VERY affordable price). We highly recommend them (and probably overused them a bit, but hey — we wanted to be WILD!). *They're Grrrrreat!*

Available from:
Cedar Software
RR 1 Box 4495
Wolcott VT 05680 USA
(802)888-5275

EVENTS CALENDAR

March

2 — American Ferret Association (AFA) championship show, "Ferret Expo '96." Location: Baltimore, MD. For information: 301-663-6616.

16 — Legion of Superferrets (LOS) National "All Specialty" show. For information: 215-946-2747.

16 — Loudon Area Ferret Fanciers (LAFF) show, "Ferrets on Parade." Location: Northern Virginia. For information: 703-777-2112.

23 — Garden State Ferret Association show; sanctioned by Ferret Unity & Registration Organization (FURO). Location: Robinsville, NJ. For information: 609-586-9526.

23 — 1996 Ferret Round Up. Speakers (no ferrets). Location: Pasadena, CA. For information: Ferrets Anonymous, PO Box 3395, San Diego CA 92163, 619-497-1084 e-mail: legalin95@aol.com.

April

13 — Far Fetched Ferrets show, "Midwest Ferret Expo '96"; sanctioned by North American Ferret Association (NAFA). Location: Elkhart Co. Fairgrounds, IN. For information: 219-296-1711 or fax 219-522-4271.

21 — Ferret Association of Rhode Island (FARI), "Ferret Frolic." Location: Kingstown, RI. For information: 401-294-6309.

27–28 — Vicki Clark's Exotics & Family Pet Showcase Exposition. Location: Garden State Park Racetrack, Cherry Hill, NJ. For information: 215-721-7199.

28 — Cumberland Valley Ferret Club/Legion of Superferrets Central PA show. For information: 717-264-3584.

May

11 — North American Ferret Association (NAFA) private show. Location: Ohio. For information: 216-753-6235.

? — Metro Ferret Rescue League. Location: Washington, DC metropolitan area. For information: 301-972-1618. (Date not available at press time.)

? — Legion of Superferrets NJ show, "Ferret Frenzy '96." For information: 908-442-4617. (Date not available at press time.)

June

8 — Great Lakes Ferret Association (GLFA) three-ring championship show, "FerretQuest." Location: Romulus, MI (across from Detroit Metro Airport). For information: 313-287-4572 or 810-471-1535 (Show Registrar).

August

17–18 — Vicki Clark's Exotics & Family Pet Showcase Exposition. Location: Raritan Center Expo Hall, Edison, NJ. For information: 215-721-7199.

24 — Legion of Superferrets WA show; sanctioned by League of Independent Ferret Enthusiasts (LIFE). Location: Seattle, WA. For information: 206-838-7341.

September

14 — Ohio Ferret Fanciers Association show; sanctioned by North American Ferret Association (NAFA). Location: Ohio. For information: 216-753-6235.

21 — Baltimore Ferret Club show. Location: Annapolis, MD. For information: 410-448-1281.

October

5 — Legion of Superferrets (LOS) National show, "Ferret Fiasco"; sanctioned by League of Independent Ferret Enthusiasts (LIFE). Location: Croydon, PA. For information: 215-946-2747 or 215-781-9044 or fax 215-946-1291.

12 — Georgia Domestic Ferret Association show; sanctioned by League of Independent Ferret Enthusiasts (LIFE). Location: Atlanta, GA. For information: 404-442-5917.

? — Greater Chicago Ferret Association show, "Greatest Ferret Show on Earth." Location: Chicago, IL. For information: 708-964-GCFA. (Date not known at press time.)

November

2 — Susquehanna Valley Ferret Club show; sanctioned by League of Independent Ferret Enthusiasts (LIFE). Location: Pennsylvania. For information: 717-540-1078.

30–Dec. 1 — Vicki Clark's Exotics & Family Pet Showcase Exposition. Location: Fort Washington Expo Center, Fort Washington, PA. For information: 215-721-7199.

If your club is having a show or fun match, you must get the information to Modern Ferret as far in advance as possible. We can no longer list shows for which we do not received information. When submitting information for a show listing, please include the following:

1. Date. 2. Club/show sponsor (e.g., Anytown Ferret Club). 3. Show title, if any (e.g., "Ferret Show #1"). 4. Sanctioning body, if any (e.g., LIFE, NAFA, AFA, FURO). 5. Place of show (city, state, hall if known). 6. Contact (can be any or all: phone/fax/address/e-mail).

READER ART

Modern Ferret's Reader Art Contest! This issue's featured artist: Apryl Peters of Cherokee Iowa with "Show Ferrets"

The Reader Art Contest is sponsored by: Discount Master Animal Care Catalog

Some other neat art we'd like to share:

This nifty envelope from Les & Sandra Hartness

This pretty picture from Mira Horsky

Well, what did you think of this issue? Drop us a note and let us know what you liked or disliked! We're always trying to improve!

Modern Ferret
PO Box 338
Massapequa Park NY 11762

Modern Ferret's Mission Statement

Modern Ferret is a bi-monthly color magazine for ferret owners by ferret owners. We are independent and not affiliated with any group or organization. However, we strongly encourage our readers to become involved with and support any local, regional, or national groups/rescues/shelters they choose. *Modern Ferret* promotes the positive image of domestic ferrets as pets by providing a popular forum for the discussion of ferret-related issues. Our editorial focus is the enjoyment of the ferret as a pet. We'll provide ferret-oriented entertainment such as interviews and articles about movies, tricks, photography, traveling, pet care, new products, and more. We'll also serve as a forum for presenting the latest medical information about ferrets—on both the veterinary and pet-owner levels. We'll produce quality products to further promote ferrets as enjoyable and popular pets. We hope to raise the general public's awareness and education level about ferrets as pets by providing a vibrant forum with a visual appeal. Our graphics will try to capture the fun-loving, playful nature of ferrets in every issue. *For ferret owners. By ferret owners.*™

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